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HOURS IN THE SCOTTISH
NATIONAL GALLERY

(EDINBURGH)

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**HOURS IN THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY
(EDINBURGH)**

By JAMES L. CAW, Director

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RAEBURN
COLONEL ALASTAIR MACDONELL OF GLENGARRY
[Frontispiece]

Hours in The Scottish National Gallery (Edinburgh)

By James L. Caw

DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND

WITH 16 ILLUSTRATIONS



DUCKWORTH

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CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
PREFACE	9
I. RAEBURN AND THE SCOTTISH PORTRAIT- PAINTERS	13
II. SCOTTISH GENRE AND HISTORY PAINTING : FROM WILKIE TO PHILLIP	28
III. THE SCOTT LAUDER GROUP AND FIGURE- SUBJECT	44
IV. SCOTTISH LANDSCAPE-PAINTING	54
V. SOME ENGLISH PICTURES	68
VI. EARLY ITALIAN PICTURES	83
VII. EARLY FLEMISH PICTURES	94
VIII. LATER ITALIAN PICTURES	104
IX. FLEMISH AND DUTCH PICTURES : SEVEN- TEENTH CENTURY	117
X. FRENCH PICTURES : EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES	130
POSTSCRIPT : OTHER PUBLIC COLLECTIONS	141

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

RAEBURN : *Colonel Alastair Macdonell of Glen-*
garry Frontispiece

	<i>Facing Page</i>
GEDDES : <i>The Artist's Mother</i>	23
WILKIE : <i>The Abbotsford Family</i>	32
DAVID SCOTT : <i>The Traitor's Gate</i>	38
ORCHARDSON : <i>The Queen of the Swords</i>	48
MCTAGGART : <i>The Coming of St. Columba</i>	62
GAINSBOROUGH : <i>The Hon. Mrs. Graham</i>	70
ROSSELLI : <i>St. Catherine of Siena</i>	86
JOOS VAN CLEEF : <i>Deposition from the Cross</i>	98
BASSANO : <i>The Adoration of the Magi</i>	110
TIEPOLO : <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	114
VAN DYCK : <i>The Lomellini Family</i>	120
HALS : <i>A Dutch Lady</i>	124
WATTEAU : <i>Fête Champêtre</i>	132
GOYA : <i>El Medico</i>	134
GAUGUIN : <i>Jacob Wrestling with the Angel</i>	140

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PREFACE

"Is there a more agreeable art gallery in the world than the Scottish National Gallery, that Playfair placed so sweetly on the Mound?"—"The Perambulator in Edinburgh," by JAMES BONE.

EVERY collection has a character of its own, and, while the National Gallery of Scotland, as a whole, is generally considered one of the best and perhaps the most charming of the smaller galleries in Europe, its most distinctive feature is the fine series of pictures illustrating the achievement of the Scottish school from the emergence of its first clearly recognisable painter in the early years of the seventeenth century to the recent past. These are arranged in the western of the two parallel suites of octagon rooms into which the building is divided, and to them the first four sections of this book are devoted.

Apart from this national aspect, the Edinburgh collection is notable, not so much for its generally representative character, as for the unusually high proportion of exceptionally fine pictures it contains. For the most part, having been either gifts or bequests, these have come together fortuitously, and even since 1904, when the gallery was first voted a small annual grant by Parliament and became possessed of other sources of income,

purchases have been made more for the sake of the pictures themselves than because they filled "blanks." Thus to a large extent the collection is a reflection of what Scotland could acquire and of what it preferred to acquire. At the same time many aspects of European art are represented in a highly interesting, if incomplete, way.

So, after discussion of the English pictures—which are rather examples of individual painters than of the school—the characteristics of the successive phases of painting shown in the collection, and especially in the outstanding works, are considered here in historical sequence, which is indeed that in which the foreign section of the gallery is arranged.

In addition to oil-pictures, water-colours, old-master drawings, a type collection of etchings and other original engravings, and a number of fine pieces of sculpture are exhibited. Showing art expression in different mediums, this adds not only to the variety, but to the vital interest of the collection. It suggests the influence of mediums upon expression, and raises the question of suitability of treatment to subject and medium alike. But it has been impossible to discuss these works, or the fascinating problems they suggest, within the limits set for this little book.

Finally, as contemporary art is not represented, a note has been added indicating the scope of the two

collections in Edinburgh in which Scottish art of the present can be studied, at such times as the annual exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy is not on view. And to that a paragraph about the Scottish National Portrait Gallery has been appended.

J. L. C.

Hours in The Scottish National Gallery

CHAPTER I

RAEBURN AND THE SCOTTISH PORTRAIT-PAINTERS

PROBABLY the room full of Raeburns, which the visitor sees first and also last on the day he makes acquaintance with the National Gallery of Scotland, remains the most memorable element in his recollection of that collection. For, while there are finer pictures in the gallery—profounder or subtler, more powerful or more exquisite—than any of the Raeburns in that room, the cumulative effect of this incomparable series of the Scottish master's virile and arresting, yet sober and self-contained, portraits is profoundly impressive. But, if Raeburn was the greatest of Scottish portrait-painters, and his work forms, with that of Wilkie in genre and Thomson of Duddingston in landscape, the beginning of the national tradition in painting, he had a few predecessors of some note. These, as had been the case in England prior to the advent of Hogarth, were almost exclusively portraitists, and painted, for the most part, parallel to the English tradition, as founded on Van Dyck and modified by Lely and Kneller.

The earliest clearly recognisable native painter, George Jamesone, who was born in Aberdeen towards the close of the sixteenth century and died in 1644, is often spoken of as the Scottish Van Dyck. Looking at his bust of the Countess Marischal, which is dated 1626 (six years before Van Dyck settled in England, be it noted), you may perhaps smile at the national vanity which inspired the comparison, but will see, at the same time, why he came by that flattering name. There is indeed a persistent tradition that he studied under Rubens in Antwerp and had Van Dyck as a fellow-pupil; but, if the technical method suggests Flemish influence, one would hesitate to say, if one came upon the picture by chance, that it was indubitably Netherlandish in origin. The drawing is more archaic, the pose stiffer, the handling more timid than we expect from a personal pupil of Rubens. Yet it and other portraits by Jamesone possess a delicate—albeit a shy and homely—beauty, which makes them personal and distinctive. As has been said, he was a delightful domestic portraitist rather than a stately and courtly one, and already, it may be pointed out, there is a hint of the fondness for enveloping and harmonious tone and more than a suggestion of the respect for character which have characterised much succeeding Scottish painting.

Of his few successors, John Michael Wright, John Scougall, and William Aikman were the most

notable before Allan Ramsay appeared in the late seventeen-thirties. The work of all three, if somewhat deficient in pictorial inventiveness and technical power, is sincere and refined, and in a quiet way accomplished. Moreover, it is completely free from the affected elegance, with its taint of social depravity, or the flamboyant and rather vulgar effectiveness which mars much of the portraiture of their fashionable and foreign contemporaries in England. Wright, at his best the ablest of this trio, is not represented here, but in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery two admirable examples show his very considerable abilities as a painter and designer to advantage. As a whole, his art was less formalised and more varied than Jamesone's. He went early to London, however, and most of his work was painted on the other side of Tweed. Aikman, who had sold the family estate in Forfarshire soon after he attained his majority, to obtain means for continuing his studies in Italy, after several years in Edinburgh, also went south. A man of refined and scholarly type, as appears from his pleasing self-portrait, he was a friend of poets, like Gay of *The Beggar's Opera*, Thomson of *The Seasons*, and Allan Ramsay, author of the famous Scots pastoral, *The Gentle Shepherd*, whose portraits by him are to be seen in the Queen Street collection. In the best of his work the Kneller formula appears, but is

marked by a refinement of feeling which makes it personal.

Allan Ramsay (1713-84), the son of the poet, was at once a better-trained and a finer artist, and his work deserves a far higher place than it is usually allotted in eighteenth-century art. To quote his father, he had been "pursuing his science since he was a dozen years auld," and, after some training in London, he repaired to Italy at the age of twenty-three, and remained there, a pupil of the French Academy and of Solimena and Imperiali in Rome, for three years. His style, immediately after his return in 1738, can be studied in the head and shoulders of the Duchess of Montrose, painted a year later. If harder and more precise in drawing and handling and more downright in rendering of character than later portraits, such as the lovely pair which hang near, it is in essentials in complete harmony with them. Trained as he was, it was unlikely that Ramsay's work would possess any obviously Scottish qualities; but it is interesting to notice that it has more affinity with French than Italian painting of his period. But while he showed no sign of being tempted to attempt high art and history, he also avoided any taint of the penchant for the vapid allegory, the conscious posturing, or the simpering allure which vitiated so much contemporary French portraiture. His interest in French art is indicated by his having

possessed the Watteau, Lancret and Pater, and the Greuze pictures now in this collection. Moreover, he counted Voltaire and Rousseau amongst his acquaintances. The highly interesting portrait of the latter in the gallery was painted (1766) for David Hume, who, like Dr. Johnson, Lord Chesterfield and Lord Bute, to name no more, was also a friend of the painter. Most of Ramsay's finest portraits were painted before he left Edinburgh in 1756 or during the following decade in London. After 1767, when he was appointed principal painter to King George III, there was a definite falling away, and even earlier he produced too many works of indifferent quality. But at his best, as in the delicious head and shoulders of his wife, or the less animated, but scarcely less delightful, *Mrs. Bruce of Arnot* in the gallery, he is accomplished without parade, and elegant without artificiality, and shows a sensitive regard for individual character. Judging from these pictures and some others in private collections, he had a personal and refined sense of beauty, was a delicate colourist, a draughtsman with an instinct for elegant form (admirably seen in studies in the black and white section), and a composer, who, if lacking in resource, had a real feeling for charm of linear disposition. Perhaps it was the feeling that his portraits expressed the finest elements in the best society of his day, as seen by itself, which prompted Horace Walpole,

who was not only a devotee of art but one of the elect of the beau-monde, to write, " Mr. Reynolds seldom succeeds in women ; Mr. Ramsay is formed to paint them." Looking at the pictures in Edinburgh, one almost agrees ; but while Ramsay, with his indubitable charm, remains the not wholly mundane incarnation of certain aspects of the eighteenth century, Gainsborough and Reynolds, who were equally its products—the former through spontaneous apprehension of a beauty deeper and more spiritual than elegance, and the latter by intellectual comprehension of character, distinction and significance of design, and a feeling for paint as material—pass from the particularity of a period to the universality which lies behind all great art.

These tentative, if in some cases charming, essays in portraiture scarcely prepare one for the racially characteristic and virile work of Raeburn and the best of his successors. For long there had been a demand for portraits, but the increasing prosperity of the country and, as regards Edinburgh, the migration of the better-off classes to the New Town and more commodious houses, led to many more portrait commissions and eventually, with the rise of the Romantic movement which centres round Sir Walter Scott, issued in a quickened sense of the part which art plays in human intercourse. It was fortunate that, coincident with these dawning possibilities of greater appreciation, an artist of

strong personality and distinctive gifts should have emerged. Unlike his predecessors, Raeburn owed little or nothing to foreign training, and possessed qualities of grit and understanding which made his work typical not only of his immediate environment, but of his nationality.

An Edinburgh man, born in 1756 at Stockbridge, where his father was a yarn-boiler, Henry Raeburn, having been left an orphan, was educated at the school founded by "Jingling Geordie," James VI's jeweller, and was apprenticed at the age of fifteen to a goldsmith in the Luckenbooths, near by St. Giles's Church. He is said to have been entirely self-taught; but his early attempts in miniature-painting were probably inspired by miniatures seen in his master's workshop, and he received hints and encouragement from his master's friend David Deuchar, a well-known seal-engraver and amateur etcher. Subsequent introduction to David Martin, who had been Ramsay's favourite pupil and assistant, promised more, but resulted in less, for Martin seems to have been jealous of the youth's growing powers, and gave him no real assistance. Thus, thrown almost entirely on his own resources, he had to teach himself the rudiments of his craft, and, following the strong instinct for reality, which appears even in his miniatures, and knowing nothing of the technical methods of oil-painting by process, he came almost naturally to the directness of

handling which is one of the most notable of his characteristics. In essentials his style was formed before 1785, when, at the age of twenty-nine, desire to see and learn more than was possible in Edinburgh took him to Italy, where he remained two years. Residence in Rome affected him little. He returned with his technical powers strengthened and his ideas of pictorial effect broadened ; but his attitude to reality, the realistic basis of his art, remained unchanged, and the further development of his style lay in the fuller and richer statement of this apprehension.

More exclusively perhaps than any portrait-painter of equal importance Raeburn was a specialist. Here, maybe, we have an indication of a limitation in his gift. Splendid as the best of his portraits are, they are less rich and varied in pictorial motive, and somewhat lacking in the power of imaginative suggestion, which together enhance not only the intellectual significance, but the pictorial beauty of the very greatest portraiture. On the other hand, if objective rather than abstract, Raeburn's portraits are tense with acute apprehension of life and character, expressed with rare skill and power. From a purely technical standpoint his handling of oil-paint is masterly. He drew with the brush, and every brush-stroke—in his finer things, at least—has vitality and significance. Moreover, the simplicity and directness of his

method has given his work time-resisting quality. Most of his pictures are in fine condition, and have retained their brilliance well. In these respects, but also as regards characterisation, he is nearer to Velazquez and Hals than to the Italians, Van Dyck, and his own English contemporaries. Like the former, he is realist rather than courtier. Indeed, few artists of any time or school have equalled him in the rendering of individual character. While, as a rule, Reynolds and Gainsborough painted social types, in each case modified by personal preferences in design and handling, Raeburn painted individuals, and, by the simplicity of his statement and the directness of his handling and style, emphasised, without exaggerating, the personal characteristics of his sitters. They belong to their time and bear the stamp of their environment, but they are rather the units which made up Scottish society in their day than generalised embodiments of its conventions or of its taste. This is most evident in his portraits of men and old ladies, but even when painting a pretty woman he rarely subordinated character to type or sacrificed individuality to elegance.

The series in the Edinburgh collection bears out R. L. Stevenson's remark that Raeburn's portraits are "racier than many anecdotes and more complete than many a volume of sententious memoirs." Moreover, nearly all of them seem to capture the unconscious air of his sitters, and this is probably

as much due to that Scottish respect for character, which made Boswell, Lockhart, and Carlyle great biographers, as to the artist's special manner of expression. As regards their realism, his—for his day—unusual sense of atmospheric envelopment also counts.

Belonging to different periods, they illustrate the evolution of his style. The earliest, *John Smith of Craigend*, dates shortly after 1787, and shows the more timid handling, greyer colour with an inclination to green, and rather starved pigment of that time; in the *Lieutenant-Colonel Lyon* seated sketching, of a little later, these are passing with increase of assurance; and the three-quarter length *Mrs. Campbell of Ballimore*, painted about 1795, is one of the finest things, not only of its period, but of his career—simple in its planes and with little superficial modelling, bold and decisive in handling, easy and natural in design. After 1800 his work was marked by fuller colour, stronger light and shade, and rounder and subtler modelling, while there was also a distinct increase in his use of plain backgrounds. *Lord Newton* (c. 1808), one of the greatest and most convincing of his achievements, painted with splendid gusto; the dignified full-length of *Colonel Alastair Macdonell* (c. 1811) in which his sense of the third dimension is specially marked; the suavely matronly and self-contained *Mrs. Kinneir*, one of the artist's triumphs in fashion;



GEDDES
THE ARTIST'S MOTHER

the lovely head and shoulders *Mrs. Scott Moncrieff* (c. 1814), which in itself gives the lie to the rumour that he could not paint a pretty girl; his own portrait (c. 1815), looking out on the world with the keenness with which he regarded his sitters; *John Wauchope, W.S.* (c. 1818), one of the subtlest of his works, may be taken as representative of the gradual development of his style and, at the same time, of the persistence of his original attitude to things.

Before Raeburn died, in 1823, his vigorous and manly art had already for some time been exerting an influence on Scottish painting, and the work of his younger contemporaries owes much to his example. But, while their portraiture has the look of a school in its general characteristics, that of the best of them possesses qualities which make it personal. As with Raeburn, design was used to express character rather than as an end in itself, a simple but rather handsome aspect being aimed at, and directness and expressiveness of handling—based upon the instinct for the material beauty of the medium, which has almost invariably marked Scottish painting—was also typical. Sir John Watson Gordon, an early President of the Royal Scottish Academy, which was founded in 1826, was the most distinguished of these successors. To begin with, his portraits showed evident traces of Raeburn's influence; but gradually he evolved a

more personal manner, and in the best efforts of his later years his colour became a pleasing if austere harmony of pearly greys and blacks, his brush-work caressing and descriptive, and everything in his arrangements was subordinated to the head, on which the principal light was concentrated. Beauty and distinction were not in his gift, but his reading of masculine character was intimate and sympathetic, and at times has an analytic quality which Raeburn usually missed. Of these qualities the *Roderick Gray* in the gallery is a fine example. With John Graham Gilbert (represented by an excellent bust of John Gibson, the sculptor) the Raeburn tradition, though apparent, was complicated by admiration for Venetian art; and it was rather his rival in Glasgow for many years, Sir Daniel Macnee, who carried it on. He has been described as "an understudy of Raeburn," but at his best—as in the quietly and broadly harmonious profile head and shoulders of *Horatio McCulloch* or the refined and spirited "*Mackay* the actor as *Bailie Nicol Jarvie*" (Portrait Gallery)—he shows an intimacy of characterisation and a delicacy of expression quite his own.

It would serve little purpose here to discuss the work of the minor portrait men of the first half of the century, who were influenced by Raeburn but attained no distinctive results, or that of even those who, like Thomas Duncan or Robert Scott

Lauder, varied history painting with such fine things as the former's self-portrait or the *Henry Lauder* by the latter, in which the prevailing convention was modified by more personal accent. But the art of Andrew Geddes (1783-1844) demands more than passing mention. Of all the Scottish portrait-painters of that time, he had the finest taste and was the subtlest colourist, while, if his actual handling was somewhat deficient in power of modelling, his touch had sparkle, and quality seemed to flow from his brush. In sheer charm few things in the collection approach his *Summer* (1828), a portrait of Nasmyth's daughter Charlotte, but also a delightful allegory of the season, pregnant with its gleaming beauty and, in its joyous colour and exquisite quality of surface, almost fragrant with its scents, suggested by the rose in her hand. Painted some fifteen years earlier, *The Artist's Mother* is more tentative in handling, but, subtly reminiscent of Rembrandt in its management of light and shade (as the pitch and colour of *Summer* are of Rubens), its restricted yet rich harmony of greenish browns and blacks and low-toned flesh is almost as beautiful, and its sense of character even more intimate and poignant. Yet it is in the wonderful head of *Sir Walter Scott* (c. 1818), in the Portrait Gallery, that he appears at his very best. In addition to work on this scale, he painted charming cabinet-size portraits, such as the full-length *George*

Saunders (1815), or the seated, three-quarter length *Andrew Plimer* (1815), in which sitter and accessories are treated in a genre spirit. He also executed a series of masterly etchings, examples of which are shown in the Print Room.

Later phases of Scottish portrait-painting are less fully illustrated than in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, which contains—in addition to many examples of the early practitioners, from Jamesone and Wright to Raeburn and Watson Gordon—characteristic works by Macnee, Herdman, and Reid, Walton, Roche, and Guthrie, to name only the more prominent. But Phillip, Herdman, McTaggart, and the brilliantly gifted but early cut-off Robert Brough, are seen in fine portraits; there are charming studies of a portrait-like simplicity by Chalmers and Torrance; and Orchardson is represented by what is considered not only his masterpiece in this kind, but one of the most notable pictorial achievements of the late nineteenth century, the *Master Baby* of 1886.

Even those who think that Orchardson's subject-pictures are too literary to be truly pictorial agree that his portraiture possesses conspicuous artistic merits. "A pity indeed it is," wrote Mr. George Moore in 1893, "that Mr. Orchardson should waste very real talent in narratives, for he is a great portrait-painter. I remember very well that beautiful portrait of his wife and child, and will take

this opportunity to recall it. It is the finest thing he has done ; finer than the portrait of Mr. Gilbey." And then, after describing the subject and indicating its exceptional qualities of characterisation and design, he proceeds : " the whole picture is filled and penetrated with the affection and charm of English home-life, and without being disfigured with any touch of vulgar or commonplace sentimentality." But when, after this praise, he says that " the picture is wanting in that totality which we find in the greatest masters," one wonders what exactly is meant. For beautiful as the colour-scheme of black and yellow is, and delightfully as the mother is drawn and characterised and her relationship to her baby is expressed, it is really in virtue of the totality of its effect—in other words, because of its design—that the picture makes such a satisfactory and impressive show on the wall.

CHAPTER II

SCOTTISH GENRE AND HISTORY PAINTING : FROM WILKIE TO PHILLIP

IF he had a few predecessors in subject-painting, Sir David Wilkie (1785-1841) may not unjustly be described as the one and only begetter of domestic genre in Scottish painting. The fervidly romantic and grandiose decorations of Alexander Runciman (1736-85)—a design for the central panel of the *Ossian Hall* in Penicuik House, destroyed by fire in 1899, and two or three etchings and drawings may be seen in the black-and-white section—and the delightful little pictures from the Bible and Shakespeare by John Runciman (1744-68), in the gallery, which are touched with a naïve imagination and an unaffected quaintness rare in the eighteenth century, were exotic in Scotland. Even the work of David Allan (1744-96), whom with himself Burns thought “the only genuine and real painters of Scottish costume in the world,” was, despite its veracious intention and its broad humour, too much tinged with the flavour of the fashionable pseudo-pastoral to have influenced him greatly. At the same time there is no doubt that the more natural

and realistic of Allan's water-colours, such as the *Penny Wedding* and *Poor Father of Twenty Children*, pointed the path soon to be taken by Wilkie and his followers. It was in a sense already a highway of what Burns, in his English vein, might have called "The Muses." In direction at least it was parallel to the long tradition of the vernacular school of poetry, then culminating gloriously in the poems of Robert Burns. Like that, it was to find its subjects in the daily life of Scots country and village people, and to be coloured by the keen relish for reality, and the genuine, if sometimes boisterous and occasionally coarse, humour, and the touching pathos which had for generations inspired Scottish ballads and folk-songs.

In the character of its subject-matter Scottish genre painting, though not originating until two hundred years later, had thus a good deal in common with much seventeenth-century Dutch art, and, though the point of contact cannot be traced, it was also related in technique to that school. None of its earlier practitioners, except Wilkie, can be compared in technical gift with the greater of the Dutch genre men; but most of them possessed real feeling for oil-paint as a material, and used it with considerable dexterity, and, almost all, told their stories with point. But while the Dutchmen and Teniers, who was also a great influence, seem to have been merely observers of social comedies or boisterous merry-makings (it is curious how seldom, if indeed

ever, pathos appears in their pictures), Wilkie and his compatriots seem to invite us to share in the feelings with which they regarded the incidents they painted. There is indeed a certain pawkiness in their observation of humorous situation and of human sympathy when the theme is sad or tender, which almost amount to commentary and may perhaps be described by some people as sentimental. Sentiment and sympathy are in themselves no justification for the existence of a picture, which must possess definite artistic merits, of design and drawing, colour, composition and execution, before it becomes a work of art ; but they are not inimical to its being one, and may even add or contribute to its purely pictorial qualities. They are, at all events, an integral part of the appeal made by the poetry of Burns, the romances of Scott and the novels and plays of Barrie ; and to Scottish painting they have brought not only enhanced and intimate emotional content, but unusual refinement and delicacy in the painting of expression. Amongst the earlier Scottish painters, Wilkie, as might be expected, had this in richest measure, but it was also possessed by Geddes and Duncan and, in his own way, by Harvey, and later we will find it contributing to the rich harmonies of Chalmers, the tender nuances of Hugh Cameron, and the subtle distinction of Orchardson.

Like Raeburn and, as we will see, Thomson of Duddingston, Wilkie owed nothing to Continental teaching. Such training as he had was received in the Trustees' Academy in Edinburgh under John Graham. In his quite early work, of which *Pitlessie Fair*, painted when he was only nineteen, is the most notable example, resemblance to Dutch painting of the seventeenth century is too near, however, to be quite accidental. It is probable, indeed, that he had seen some fairly good, though not necessarily first-class, pictures of that school. As to choice of subject, his natural instincts had not been warped by notions of high art and history learned in Italy, and no doubt he followed a personal impulse when he commenced to paint the scenes about him and the life he knew in Fifeshire round his father's manse at Cults. The analogy between his pictures and Burns's poems is very close. Both drew inspiration from the life of the Scots peasantry and possessed the born artist's instinct for the craftsmanship and the kind of composition which would heighten and enhance the artistic effect of the stories they had to tell.

Always a student and giving notable care to the fit and full expression of his feelings, Wilkie, when opportunity offered, after his removal to London in 1805, set himself to learn from the old masters of his genre, from Teniers, Ostade, Rubens and Rembrandt, and when, following a long sojourn

abroad (1825-8), he altered his manner, with what many think regrettable results, he claimed the example of Velazquez and Murillo in support of the change. If *Pitlessie Fair* (which was followed by the *Village Politicians*, the appearance of which in the London Academy of 1806 made him famous) may be said to contain in germ not his own achievement alone but most pictures of domestic genre painted in both England and Scotland, during the greater part of the nineteenth century, his self-portrait, painted about 1808, reveals the great advance he made in artistry during the next few years. But in *The Abbotsford Family* (1817), which, to quote a letter of Sir Walter's, shows Scott and his family "in the garb of south-country peasants supposed to be concerting a merry-making," or the delightful little scene from *The Gentle Shepherd* (1823), his earlier style is seen near its charming best. In both the touch is felicitous, sensitively suggestive and spirited, yet controlled by a fine sense of nuance and accent, and marked by acute feeling for envelopment, and the mellow colour-scheme of faded ivories and warm, muted browns, with touches of brighter colour in the costumes, is in complete harmony with the broadly distributed light and shade. In both, also, one can see how deftly he turned his debt, in a technical sense, to Ostade and Teniers to personal uses. The vital and brilliant study for the *Preaching of Knox*,



WILKIE
THE ABBOTSFORD FAMILY

although the basis of a celebrated picture (1832) of his later period in the Tate Gallery, which has suffered much from the more treacherous methods he subsequently adopted, also belongs to the 'twenties. Fortunately, perhaps, *The Bride's Toilet* (1838), the most important work of his later period in this collection, is not an historical subject and is on a scale which, if considerable, was more in harmony, not only with his technical equipment, but with his manner of conception, than his more ambitious efforts. Subjectively it might belong to his pre-continental years and, as in almost all his successes, it is founded on observation and sympathy rather than on invention and intellectual effort. Moreover, its condition is sound and brilliant, and it has the "depth of tone," which was one of his later ambitions, without the forced methods and the use of asphaltum, which have ruined or dulled many of his pictures of the same period.

Wilkie had begun as his own librettist, and, as long as he painted the life he knew and understood, he produced admirable pictures, conceived pictorially while telling stories charmingly, and executed with a mastery of delicately expressive craftsmanship and design which delights. But when he turned to historical subjects and became dramatic inventor rather than observant analyst and witty commentator, and, at the same time, adopted, but

scarcely mastered, a broader style, he lost this sure source of inspiration.

Looking round the Scottish pictures in the gallery, Wilkie's influence, both technically and in the way subject is treated, is clearly traceable in many. None of his contemporaries equalled him in either respect, but attention may perhaps be called to *A Scotch Wedding* and *Reading the Will*, by W. H. Lizars, which, if much inferior to Wilkie's pictures of similar subjects, preceded them by several years, and to works by William Simson, whose gift was really for landscape, William Kidd and others. But it was rather in the work of the domestic genre painters of the next generation such as Eckford Lauder, whose *Bailie McWheeble at Breakfast* is specially brilliant, that his example bore its finest fruit.

Almost simultaneously with the beginning of domestic genre, Scottish artists commenced to paint scenes from history and romance. If domestic genre, with its inclination to humour and pathos, owed much to the vernacular school and Robert Burns, the historical phase of incident painting, which had been little practised by the Dutchmen, was greatly stimulated by Sir Walter Scott. Technically Wilkie had a predominating influence here also; but, some years before he took to it himself, this phase had been inaugurated by Sir William Allan (1783-1850), who had been a

fellow-pupil. Allan had travelled and painted in Russia and the Caucasus for nine years prior to 1814, when he returned to Edinburgh, and in the sphere of Oriental subjects he had been a pioneer. But friendship with Scott turned his attention to the illustration of history and, combining with the prevailing enthusiasm for the Waverley novels, laid the foundations of Scottish historical painting. Allan, as may be seen from *The Black Dwarf*, was not a great painter, but as Master of the Trustees' Academy, as well as from the novelty of his work, his influence gave an impetus to historical art in Scotland. For the most part this issued in painted illustrations of historical incidents rather than in finely conceived pictures with historical subject-matter.

At his best Thomas Duncan, who was a gifted colourist, a refined executant and an excellent designer, attained truly pictorial effects. Compared with the pictures of Maclise, Egg, and other of his contemporaries in England, such a work as *Anne Page and Slender* is informed by a more pictorial conception of treatment, finer colour united to subtler fusion of effect, a much greater sense of material and touch, and a more sensitive and personal feeling for beauty. These distinctive qualities being completely suited to the sentiment of the scene from *The Merry Wives*, it is not only his most satisfactory picture but one of the very

best of its class and period. Robert Scott Lauder, seen in the very large *Christ Teacheth Humility*, with its dignified general design, graceful, if rather weak, drawing, and finely conceived and balanced colour-scheme, and in the technically accomplished and charmingly arranged *Portrait of Henry Lauder*, the fine tonal qualities of which should be noted, also achieved results which, admirable in themselves, reveal a wider culture and are of peculiar interest in relation to the work of the brilliant group of painters trained by him in the Trustees' Academy during the eighteen-fifties. The historical pictures of James Drummond, whose *Porteous Mob* depicts the old town and life of Edinburgh in a very interesting way, and of several other painters of the period, were more mechanical and less painter-like, if perhaps archæologically more correct.

Sir George Harvey (1806-76), while working in the Wilkie tradition, treated a special kind of incident in a personal way and made a very distinctive contribution to Scottish figure-painting. The obviously picturesque was not his rôle, and technically he was less accomplished than some of his fellows. But in choosing the Covenanting epoch and placing many of his incidents out of doors, where his special gift for landscape enriches and envelops the ensemble, the transparent sincerity and national flavour of his sentiment had full play, and a certain homeliness in his types and even in

his style gives such pictures as *The Covenanters' Communion*, an infective and poignant appeal of their own to his fellow-countrymen. Nor in their different vein, touched by a sense of humour, were his pictures of national sports, like *The Curlers* or *The Bowlers*, less successful. In the happily balanced way in which figure-incident and landscape are associated in his pictures, and in his tenderly sympathetic rendering of child-life, of which *A Schule Skailin'* is an admirable example, he was the precursor of these things as they appear in the subtler and more accomplished art of McTaggart, Chalmers and Cameron.

Amongst Scottish painters of the first half of the nineteenth century David Scott (1806-49) occupies a unique place. It was, as has been indicated, a time of humorous or pathetic genre and somewhat tame, if occasionally charming, historical illustration, and he was a dreamer and a poet with an imagination dramatic and whimsical by turns. Moreover, he composed in a large and bolder way, with a sense of spacing and colour at once nobler and more expressive than his contemporaries, and he handled oil-paint, if less dexterously than some, with innate feeling for its natural richness, and the splendid volume of tone attainable in it, exceedingly rare in his day. In these respects he might be compared, not wholly to his disadvantage, with Delacroix (1799-1863), his contemporary and the incarnation

of French romanticism. His draughtsmanship was more questionable ; but, if frequently marred by obvious distortions, it was usually expressive and at times impressively significant. The tragic issues which often underlie his ideas are poignantly expressed in *The Traitor's Gate*, which is also notable for remarkable passages of painting, such as the partially-seen figure on the left and the subtilty with which the wan twilight of dawn over the sea—a nocturne before Whistler—is suggested. The other end of his gamut appears in *Puck Fleeing before the Dawn*, a whimsy of the imagination and not merely a fanciful invention, with a design of great decorative beauty in which a lovely effect of nature is used to splendid creative purpose. *Ariel and Caliban* belongs to the same sphere, and in *Paracelsus the Alchemist Lecturing* he has caught the inner spirit of mediævalism, with its belief in astrology, its search for the philosopher's stone, and its sense of religion and chivalry. More purely decorative in intention and treated in a more abstract way, *A Vintager* illustrates another phase, and amongst the black and whites are several fine monochrome designs and etchings by him.

Rossetti thought David Scott the painter most nearly fulfilling the highest requirements for historic art, both as a thinker and a colourist, who had appeared among us from the time of Hogarth to his own ; but, if this shows the high regard in which his



DAVID SCOTT
THE TRAITOR'S GATE

pictures were held by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which came together in 1848, a year before he died, Scott's art was, in technique at least, the antithesis of Pre-Raphaelitism.

But to a few Scottish painters amongst Scott's contemporaries or immediate successors, the aims and methods of the Brotherhood were congenial. Of these William Dyce (1806-64) was the most notable. With his wide culture and his appreciation of early religious art, the latter very unusual then, he had arrived at somewhat the same conclusions before the youthful reformers had come together and formulated their creed. Unfortunately there is no example of Dyce's Pre-Raphaelite painting in the Edinburgh Gallery. The *Infant Hercules* of 1830 reveals a personal use of a Titianesque scheme of colour combined with a certain richness of pigment and handling also Venetian in origin, and the *Francesca da Rimini* of 1837, marked by great refinement of feeling, specially noticeable in the girl's expression and attitude, shows the actual beginnings of Italian Pre-Raphaelite influence, though it is only that of Raphael's master, Perugino. In these, however, we have a foreshadowing of that "sculpturesque grace of form" which, Ruskin said, Dyce introduced into the English movement. There is also in the Raphael-esque tempera cartoon for tapestry, *The Judgment of Solomon* (1836), clear indication of the gift for decorative design, which, in the later years of his

life, issued in the distinguished and charmingly appropriate mural paintings in the Royal Robing Room in the Houses of Parliament, and in All Saints' Church.

Sir J. Noel Paton (1821-1901) was also senior to the Pre-Raphaelites ; but in many ways he sympathised with their ideals and indeed practised minute and truthful detail in realisation before they did. *The Reconciliation* and *The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania*, from the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, with all their elaboration of natural fact, moss-covered stones, beaded brooklets, straying flowery growths, and woodland intricacies, and their delicate fancy and fertile invention in figure-grouping and incident, equally elaborate in rendering, were painted in 1847 and 1849 respectively. But he was not a thorough-going and fervid reformer like the young Millais or Holman Hunt. He had neither their intensity of purpose nor their passion for reality, and his pictures, if superficially Pre-Raphaelite, are deficient in real grip and lacking in true painter-like quality. His technique and draughtmanship, while accomplished in their own way, are neat, deft and accurate rather than easy, coherent and strong ; his handling, for a Scottish painter especially, shows little sense of touch or paint-quality ; and his ingenious and often interesting compositions fail in the romantic and emotional elements of colour, concentration and suggestiveness.

In some incidents from history, however, Paton attained more purely pictorial results and reached a higher technical level. *Luther at Erfurt* (1861) is one of the most successful of these. Later he treated religious themes and great moral truths on a large scale, but this phase, which was enormously popular and has been described as "one of the landmarks of Victorian taste," is not represented in the collection.

Upon Sir William Fettes Douglas (1822-91) likewise the P.R.B. devotion to detail seems to have had an effect. It coincided, however, with his own special interests and was used in a personal way. Despite his fondness for recondite and out-of-the-way subjects for figure-pictures, he had not the instinct for dramatic or pathetic expression, which gives interest to the work of several contemporaries less gifted as artists. But on the intellectual side his pictures are often intriguing and frequently fascinating, and they are painted with great, yet unobtrusive, skill. His masterpiece, *Hudibras and Ralph Visiting the Astrologer* (1856), from Butler's *Hudibras*, a favourite source of subject with him, is in the gallery, and *The Spell* (1864), a scene of necromancy in which he was much interested, is almost as good. These and one or two less important works show his great technical gift, and especially his wonderful skill in painting still life, which is incomparable in his own school and rarely

surpassed outside. In later life he painted a few remarkable landscapes in oil, of which *Stonehaven Harbour* is one of the most notable, and many charming water-colours.

Starting as a disciple of Wilkie, John Phillip (1817-67), who was only a few years older than Paton and Douglas, painted for a good many years pictures little better than second-rate Wilkies. But Spain in 1851 and during two later sojourns supplied a stimulus, through the pictures in the galleries, in a technical way, but also by the novel picturesqueness he found in the life he saw in Seville, which turned him into an original and powerful painter. This enhanced expressive power he put to use in the vivid and attractive series of pictures which earned him the name "Phillip of Spain." While Wilkie, brought into contact with a bolder art than his own, had lost much of his peculiar and personal talent, Phillip found himself. Despite the picturesque costumes and less familiar social life, which give his Spanish pictures a different and novel look, he remained a genuine genre painter. The incidents he painted were observed rather than invented, and, except in one picture, and that was treated as if it had been a contemporary event, he never essayed history. If not very profound, his work is often piquant in idea and nearly always pictorial in conception, while it is also marked by great dexterity and gusto

of handling, and by a bolder and more emphatic, though not a more subtle, use of colour than had appeared hitherto in Scottish painting. *La Gloria* (1864), sometimes called *The Spanish Wake*, is almost the only picture in which he touched life below the surface. As it happens it is also his *chef-d'œuvre*.

Divided diagonally into broad masses of light and dark, redeemed from too great obviousness by reflected lights on the one side and darker tones of colour or minor passages of shadow on the other, *La Gloria* is singularly effective in design, while, as W. D. McKay pointed out, the free air, the light, the abounding vitality and, above all, the spontaneity and gusto of the technique, counteract any feeling of repugnance. With its developed interest in colour, broader style, and more pictorial relationship to subject, Phillip's work forms a link between the earlier Scottish painting of last century and that which followed in the pictures of Robert Scott Lauder's pupils, among whom his example was an influence.

CHAPTER III

THE SCOTT LAUDER GROUP AND FIGURE-SUBJECT

TOWARDS the close of the eighteen-fifties the work of a number of young painters began to attract attention, and gradually became an important element in Scottish art. All of them had been born in the 'thirties and had been pupils of Robert Scott Lauder in the Trustees' Academy, and their pictures possessed qualities which differentiated them in a subtle way from those of their predecessors and immediate elders. If they inherited something of the Wilkie tradition in technique, and the human element, so strong in Scottish genre, persisted in their attitude to subject, they treated subject-matter, not as material for coloured illustration of story or history, but as opportunity for picture-making. To this—stimulated to some extent by the example of the rather earlier Pre-Raphaelites—they added a greater sensitiveness to real light and the actual appearances of nature. Their master's influence and the interplay of a group of ardent and gifted youths amongst themselves had, however, more to do with the special character and

merits of their art. Lauder was an admirer of the great Italians, and especially of the Venetians, and an admirable technician ; but, although his devotion to colour influenced them, his way was not to impress himself on his pupils, but to stimulate them to the expression of what was best in themselves. So, while having certain things in common, each of the stronger men developed on his own lines and achieved an art that was personal and distinctive.

Broadly considered in relation to the older Scottish painters or the English Pre-Raphaelites and their Scottish adherents, who were their elders by some years, the Lauder group possessed a more purely pictorial conception of subject ; a more synthetic grasp of reality, resulting in less crowded and more concentrated design ; a finer sense of quality in pigment and of touch in handling ; and, with a passion for colour, a more subtle and sensitive perception of harmony. Perhaps the last was the most distinctive element, though the way in which they used oil-paint was closely related to and, indeed, inseparable from it. The exquisite way in which they often rendered fine shades of facial expression also depended on delicacy of handling. Vibrating and luminous, the rich, broken colour-chords in which they delighted presented a marked contrast to the chiaroscuro-charged colour of their Scottish predecessors, while, compared with that of the Pre-Raphaelites, their colour possessed richer

quality and deeper harmony, and was free from the look of being lighted from behind, like a transparency, instead of by light falling upon the surface of the picture.

The toll London had taken of Scottish painting since the time of Wilkie and Roberts, and even earlier, was continued in the case of Lauder's pupils. Early in the 'sixties Orchardson, Pettie, and Tom Graham went south (Dyce, Phillip, and Faed were already there), and before ten years were out MacWhirter, Peter Graham and the Burrs had joined them. Only Chalmers, McTaggart, and Cameron were left, but their art, although even now little known in London, was no less notable and distinctive. The richness and variety which marks the work of this group as a whole is admirably shown in the gallery.

Of recent years there has been a disposition in some quarters to disparage Orchardson's talent (1832-1910) and dismiss him somewhat contemptuously as merely an illustrator and a painter of manners. But one might as justly level the same reproach against Vermeer or Watteau or Hogarth. The fact that he usually, though not always, chose incidents from the past and preferred to paint them in stately interiors, with charming accessories, has nothing to do with the point at issue. The real question is, did he or did he not, while telling his stories with wit or irony, and always with point,

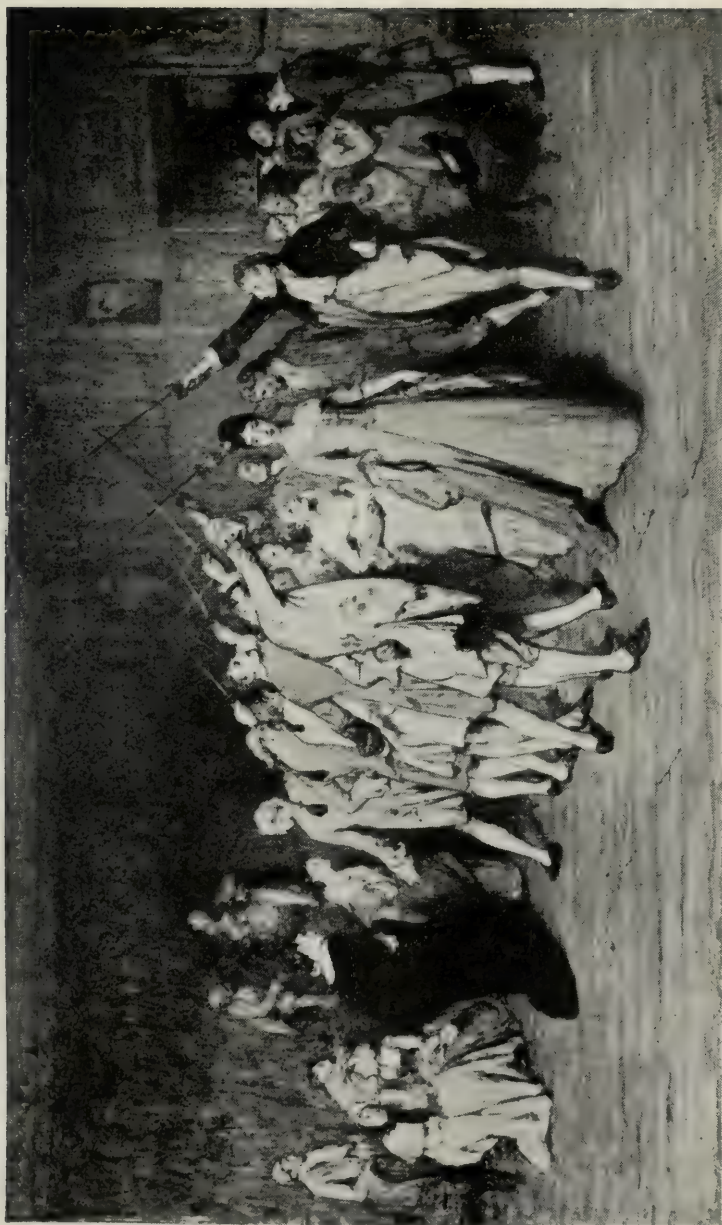
treat his subjects pictorially and paint with accomplishment and charm. That he did so must be admitted, I think, by anyone who looks, without prejudice, at the *Queen of Swords*, or the *Voltaire*, the portrait-group *Master Baby*, or the full-length of *Lady Orchardson*, which represent him here.

Taking *Voltaire* first, the tones are resonant and subtly modulated, the colour, delicate and varied in passages, is fused and harmonious, the general effect rich and sumptuous. Moreover, the linear design on which these are built is extraordinarily subtle in rhythm, accent, and balance. The scene is one of those spacious and sparsely-furnished French eighteenth-century salons he often painted, and the balance between the figure incident in light against the shadowed, tapestry-hung walls shows the apt use of accent against empty space, the latter being as important pictorially as the former, in which he excelled. To this gift of expressive design his pictures, usually somewhat thin and scrubby in actual brush-work, owe their wonderful carrying power. M. Chesneau, describing Orchardson's colour, said that it was as harmonious as the wrong side of an old tapestry, and it may be added that his penchant for ivory whites and golden or lacquer browns, with passages of delicate but more vivid colour, is really a subtler version of an old Scottish preference. Singularly elegant in composition and richly harmonious in colour, the *Voltaire*

(1883), also shows his exceptional gift of refined and expressive drawing—with style in its bones, so to speak—to signal advantage.

In its less dramatic but more explicit way, the smaller version of *The Queen of Swords* (1876) is an even lovelier thing. The colour-scheme forms a high-keyed harmony of peculiar charm, and is finely sustained by the elegance of the pattern made by the receding lines of gallants, under the arch of whose upraised swords the ladies are passing. If, when looking at it, one thinks of Watteau, it is the engaging elegance of the design and the exquisiteness of the draughtsmanship, and not any subjective or emotional resemblance, which stirs the memory. Orchardson's work as a portrait-painter was discussed in the first chapter, and need not be referred to again.

If the more obviously dramatic and immediately effective art of John Pettie (1839–93) is seen less importantly in the Edinburgh collection, two pictures by him give a not inadequate idea of his pictorial intentions and technical gifts. While his drawing was less distinguished and stylish than Orchardson's, and he had not that artist's instinct for perfect balance in design, he handled paint in a more robust and flowing way, with a finer sense of the material and a more painter-like quality of touch, was, if a less refined, a healthier and more powerful colourist, and composed in a strikingly



ORCHARDSON
THE QUEEN OF THE SWORDS



dramatic and richly pictorial way. Chiaroscuro and colour were equal partners in his design ; but, if the effect depended upon their just balance, it was perhaps rather in the latter that the charm lay. His acute feeling for drama in incident or situation verged, but seldom trespassed, on the theatrical, and was often lightened by touches of sardonic humour. For the full exercise of these powers Pettie usually required a canvas of considerable size, but even on the smaller picture-space of *Cromwell's Saints* (1862), an early work, but instinct with his qualities, or *Who Goes ?* (c. 1880) they are admirably seen.

One of the truest and most delightful artists in the group, though a somewhat uncertain performer, Tom Graham (1840-1906)—who formed in the early years in London a trio with Orchardson and Pettie—is represented by what, everything considered, is probably his masterpiece. Painted in 1864, *A Young Bohemian* was for long a treasured possession of John Sargent, and ranks amongst the finest achievements of the school. Marked by a rare perception of beauty, lovely colour, and delightful handling, looser than that of his confrères at the same period, yet finished and precise, it holds a hint of that charmingly quaint naturalism which informs the earlier work of Millais, and is at the same time highly personal.

In the pictures of the Lauder pupils who remained
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at home the subjects are usually taken from everyday life, and are exceedingly simple in their elements. Dramatic invention and picturesquely-circumstanced incident, as used by Orchardson and Pettie, and those influenced by them, are almost unknown in the work of Chalmers, Cameron, and McTaggart. They were moved emotionally and pictorially by what they observed in the life about them. Even when compared with Wilkie, with his frolic and laughter, or Tom Faed, with his pathos and tears drawn from Scottish peasant life, they were less inventors of intriguing or moving incident than interpreters of the simple joys and daily toils of the humble.

With G. P. Chalmers (1833-78) pictorial effect is largely the result of subtle management of light and shade ; but, while his designs are based to a great extent on chiaroscuro, the tones are enhanced by the suggestion of richly luminous colour his brush-work always carries. Added to this, the flushed, pearly quality of his flesh and the melodious resonance of the few passages of more positive colour he used—a bit of deep red here or of low-toned blue there—seem to suggest that colour runs through the mystery of the brown tone which usually forms the ground of his harmonies. The variety he achieved within these limitations, his tenderness of feeling, and the mingled strength and delicacy of his handling are admirably shown in the gallery.

Nothing could well be simpler in subjective matter or richer in pictorial effect than *The Tired Devotee* or *Modesty*, for in his hands chiaroscuro (which had been used by earlier Scots as a means of mapping out design and placing masses) became a subtle vehicle of emotion also. In both also his very sensitive painting of expression, refined feeling being translated into subtle brush-work, is very apparent. Technical success, however, did not come easily to him, and not a few of his pictures are somewhat tentative in handling, if almost always charmingly suggestive. Exceedingly fastidious, and hardly ever satisfied with the results achieved, he was always striving to give fuller expression to his feelings and his pictorial ideals. *The Legend*, perhaps his most important and finest work, was fourteen years on his easel, and was left, they say, unfinished. Yet one would not wish it other than it is. His landscape, which is also represented characteristically, will be discussed later.

In the art of Hugh Cameron (1835-1918) during its middle period, as may be seen in his diploma work, *Play* (1870), in the Academy collection, chiaroscuro also had a considerable, if less emphatic, part. But earlier, in such pictures as *Going to the Hay* (1858-9) in the gallery, where Pre-Raphaelite sympathy is evident in pitch of lighting and the elaborate and loving painting of the detail, and later, when he fell again under the spell of sunshine,

he painted in a higher key and with comparatively little shadow. In these two phases his work approximates to that of McTaggart,¹ which was, however, while equally tender, more robust and joyous, and incomparably more adventurous. His pictures are often fragrant with a peculiar intimacy of sentiment expressed with rare delicacy, in which refinement of drawing, and handling, sensitive modulation of hues within softly mellow colour harmonies, and delightful tonal quality are very happily blended. Painted late in life, though founded on a sketch made some forty years before, *A Toiler of the Hills* (1911) lacks the delicately-fused precision of his early style and misses the closely wrought beauty of his middle period, but it is deeper in sentiment and is otherwise finely representative of his special gifts.

While to discuss the work of minor painters of the Lauder group or of others—like Herdman or Lockhart, who were working parallel to them, but in a rather different and more illustrative manner—is tempting, enough has been said to convey an impression of the main movements and tendencies of Scottish genre painting throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century. The phase, which commenced in the eighteen-eighties, and was in the beginning associated chiefly with “The Glasgow

¹ McTaggart's art is discussed in the landscape section, to which its later developments more properly belong.

School," is not as yet illustrated to any extent in the collection. But attention should perhaps be directed to the charming picture by J. E. Christie (1847-1914), *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, for in it the use of "values" as a basis of representation and their influence upon technique begin to be apparent. It may be noted also that *The Pied Piper* is almost contemporary with *Pas Mèche* by Bastien-Lepage in the modern French and Dutch room.

Scottish animal painters of conspicuous merit have been few, but Robert Alexander, the most gifted of them, is represented by what is perhaps his finest picture, and this seems the best place to refer to it. Almost always, even when, as in *The Happy Mother*, there is no obvious human link, he painted animals as the friends and companions of men. Yet he never humanised them or made them conscious actors in life's humours or ironies. They live their own lives, and his compositions are the issue of sympathetic observation of reality and a sensitive sense of pictorial balance and tone rather than of dramatic inventiveness or formal design. The delicate expressiveness of his drawing, the rich textures of his handling, the quietly graded tones and the subdued colour harmonies he loved are all present in *The Happy Mother* and make it, with its caressingness and charm of sentiment, one of the more notable pictures of its period as well as of its school.

CHAPTER IV

SCOTTISH LANDSCAPE-PAINTING

LANDSCAPE-PAINTING in Scotland may be said to have begun in the later eighteenth century with the pictures of Alexander Runciman, Alexander Nasmyth, and Andrew Wilson. All of them had studied in Italy, whence they brought something derived from Claude into their treatment of Scottish landscape. While painting scenes in Scotland they composed them on what were considered classic lines, and steeped them in the mellow yellow sunshine of Italy as interpreted by the great Lorraine master. Something kindred to Richard Wilson's treatment and sense of design appears in Runciman ; but the handling of Nasmyth is much more closely related to that of the Dutchmen, and, though his subject-matter is different, many of his smaller and finer pictures, such as *The Windings of the Forth* in the gallery, are reminiscent in a feeble way of the Boths and other Italianised Hollanders of the seventeenth century. Yet, in virtue of his having been the first native artist to paint Scottish scenery with any real regard for its essential character,

Wilkie's description of him as "the founder of the landscape school of painting of Scotland" is in some degree justified.

John Thomson (1778-1840)—who from 1805 was the parish minister at Duddingston, the picturesque village which nestles on the edge of the loch at the foot of Arthur's Seat and looks across the Lothian fields and woods to the Pentlands and the Moorfoot Hills—had had a few lessons from Nasmyth in youth; but he came at a time when romance was in the air and a new feeling for landscape was stirring in men's minds. Walter Scott, as R. L. Stevenson pointed out, had brought the background into literature as no one before him had done. Thomson, finding romance in the background, made it the theme of his landscape-painting. Often the subjects he chose had historical associations, and frequently the strongholds of the past, perched on high cliffs above the sea or set in ancient forests, figure in his pictures. But, beyond this obvious romance, he possessed a feeling for design and a sensitiveness to the transfiguring effects of atmosphere and its dramatic suggestions which made him not merely a literary romantic. His early work was influenced by the Dutch tradition; but gradually he came to think that Scottish scenery "was peculiarly suited to a treatment in which grandeur and wildness were to a certain extent the leading characteristics," and, founding his style

upon the classic convention of the Poussins and Claude, with now and then a melodramatic touch borrowed from Salvator Rosa, he achieved a bold and broadly expressive manner. The sense of structure behind was insufficient and his colour, usually confined to harmonies of deep-toned but luminous blues and browns and golden greys, was arbitrary, if beautiful. Yet, associated with his dramatic use of light and shade and his personal apprehension of atmospheric effect, his designs were often impressive, and frequently express a romantic mood with felicity and power. In this respect the little *Castle on a Rock* is specially characteristic, but *Ravensheugh Castle* and *On the Firth of Clyde*, if more Claudeian in manner, are also finely romantic. At times too, as in *Aberlady Bay* and, in less degree, the *Wooded Landscape*, he treats a scene more naturalistically, and, without lessening his own poetry, seems to come closer to the quiet and more profound spirit of nature. With these high gifts, it was unfortunate that the Rev. John Thomson of Duddingston should not have learned his craft and acquired sound methods in the use of his material.

The Highland scenes of Horatio McCulloch (1805-67) bear traces of Thomson's influence and connect it with later developments. To some extent he retained the power of design which the artist-minister had displayed, but, more linear and

scenic in quality, his pictures are less distinguished and massive in effect. His handling was neither powerful nor sensitive enough, his colour too artificial and his drawing and idea of generalisation were too superficial, being neither nobly conventional nor frankly naturalistic, to attain great results. Yet at times he hovered on the verge of a romantic idea, as in *The Lowland River*, and not infrequently, as in *Inverlochy Castle*, he expressed certain aspects of Scottish scenery with considerable truth. He lacked the acute sense of colour and atmosphere one finds in Scott's descriptive poetry, but, in most other respects, he gave pictorial expression to much the same feeling for landscape. So he and his immediate and more recent followers, down to Peter Graham and John MacWhirter, might be described as the "Land of the Mountain and the Flood School."

There is something kindred to the Dutch tradition in the handling and brown tone of McCulloch's landscape, and some of his more notable Scottish contemporaries were much influenced by it. Patrick Nasmyth, the English Hobbema as he is often called, in English hedgerow landscapes, Jock Wilson, in coast and shipping scenes, and David Roberts, in accomplished architectural pieces, were the most conspicuous of these. But at his very best, as in *Solway Moss* or *The Twelfth of August*, William Simson made a more personal and charming use of

similar methods. Wilkie seldom essayed landscape, but in *Sheep-washing*, his most important work of the kind, the influence of Cuyp is very clear. From about the middle of last century, while the Scoto-Dutch convention in handling continued to affect a good many Scots painters, such as E. T. Crawford, a definite increase in brilliance of lighting, and freshness of colour begins to appear. Apparent in the Highland landscapes of Sir George Harvey and Milne Donald, and in the more varied themes of J. C. Wintour, Sam Bough and Alexander Fraser, taking them in order of progression, from the underlying brown basis of the earlier men, these tendencies were to reach fullness of expression in the work of certain pupils of Robert Scott Lauder, who began to exhibit in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties.

In the landscape settings of Harvey's Covenanted incidents there had been a glimmering of them; but it is rather in the pure landscapes steeped in "pastoral melancholy"—such as the water-colours in the upper room—of his later years that one sees emerging a subtler sense of atmospheric envelopment, rather than of "values," for a soupçon of brown persists in the shadows, and the tone remains low. J. C. Wintour's work also was dark and old-masterly in tone; but, while taking little account of the local colour of objects, it was cooler and more aerial. A personal element in conception, however, gives his landscape a somewhat special place. He

had a sense of balanced and rhythmic design, both in the big masses and the more delicate nuances, which, with a poetic, if scarcely a profound, sentiment for nature, makes him a romantic. The finely composed *Border Castle* and *The Water of Leith* give an admirable idea of his qualities.

Both Sam Bough (1822-78) and Alexander Fraser (1827-99) had a keener perception of light and of its effect on landscape, but, while the first used it as a vivifying or dramatic element in his scenic compositions, the second observed it more closely and loved more its gentle play and the beauty it revealed. Bough, of course, was a very effective and resourceful artist, and attacked his problems with splendid élan, if little subtilty. Few men could have been at once so topical and so picturesque as he is in *The Royal Review*, 1860, or put so much unity of light and movement into the great expanse of the King's Park, with masses of spectators and marching regiments, backed by the complexity of Edinburgh lying under the clear light of a bright day, with floating clouds, as he has here attained. Yet there is a want of fineness in the seeing, of quality in the handling and the colour, and of real pictorial distinction in the conception. It was much the same whatever kind of subject he painted, and that was very varied as other pictures in the collection show. He was always scenic in effect, and deft, and sometimes dramatic, in his introduction of incident.

On the other hand, landscape-painting has seldom come nearer the modesty of nature than in many of Alexander Fraser's pictures. If he did not interpret nature, as the poet-painters do, he was singularly responsive to the familiar and abiding charm of the beautiful facts of reality. His pictures indeed seem mere transcripts, until one realises that their perfectly normal appearance is accompanied by careful regard for pictorial balance and harmony of colour, if scarcely for decorative effect, and is attained by an unobtrusive technical mastery which embraces drawing and touch as one. Often his light scintillates and his colour has that brilliant enamel-like quality, lustrous and harmonious, which one sees in Scotland. He was as successful too with the fresh, living green and blue of summer, then somewhat new in art, as with the dying splendour of autumnal russet and gold. The two Cadzow pictures in the collection are typical of his summer landscape, but perhaps the *Sheep-fold, Haslemere*, small as it is, is a finer example of his technique. Although showing some admiration for the work of Cox, Muller, and Linnell, and influenced to a limited extent by the higher pitch and clearer colour of the Pre-Raphaelites, the landscape of Bough and Fraser is very personal, and each made a distinctive contribution to Scottish art.

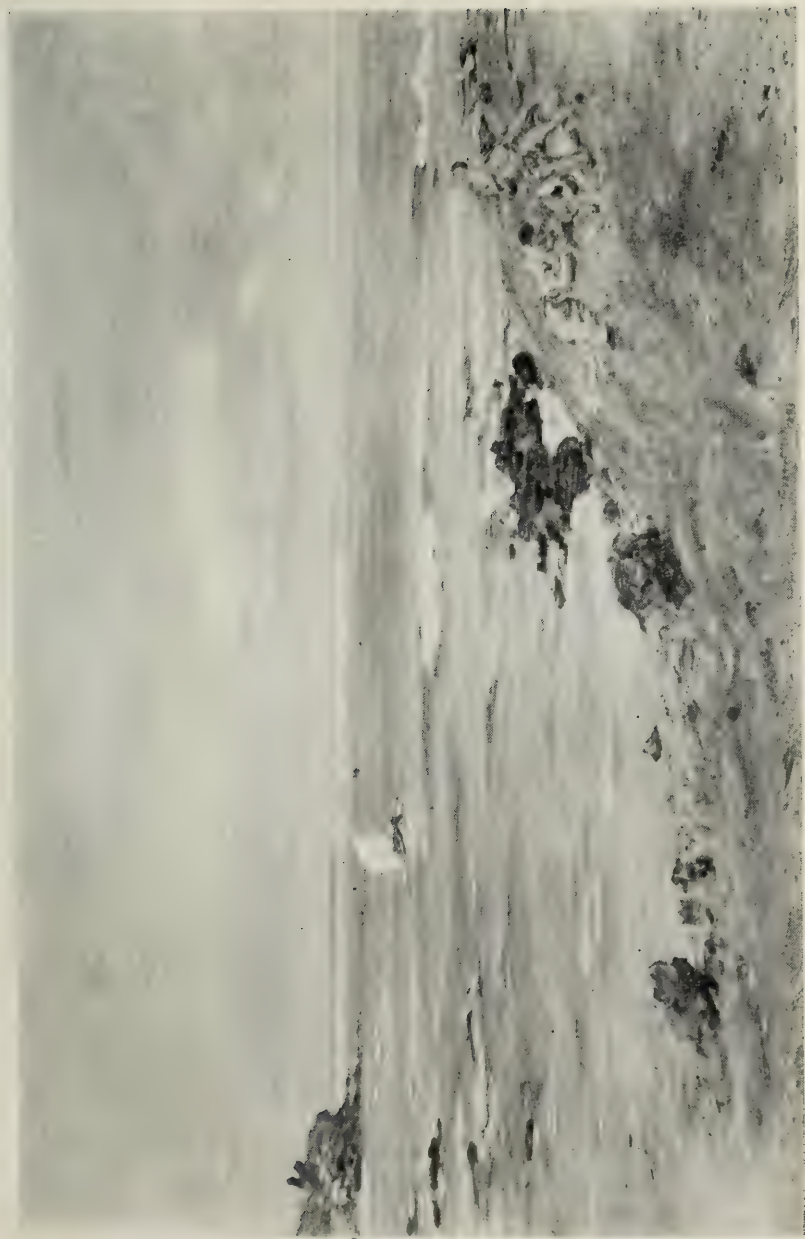
A finer and more emotional apprehension of reality and a more exquisite feeling for art appeared

in the landscapes, often with figures, by certain painters of the Lauder group and by a few of their slightly younger contemporaries.

The poetic realism which had underlain the best Scottish landscape-painting since Thomson of Duddingston, and had revealed itself chiefly perhaps in sensitiveness to the fusion of colour in atmosphere, now attained its culmination in the work of William McTaggart (1835-1910). More sensitive than any of his Scottish predecessors or contemporaries in that respect, he also excelled them in technical power, and, through that and by his special use of design based on linear accent and colour-spacing, in awakening in the spectator response to the visual harmony wrought by nature. In the power of creating illusion in a high key his work rivals that of the French impressionists to which it was parallel. Born five years after Pissaro and five before Claude Monet, he quite independently and somewhat earlier arrived at conclusions not unlike theirs in effect, although more significant and more poetic in feeling. Colour and light and movement, and the "downright fresh air" they suggest, are not everything in art, though in landscape-painting they are a good deal. But to McTaggart nature was much more. Art too was a far profounder thing than skilful representation or the production of vivid illusion. To him, nature was the visible embodiment of a spiritual power,

and art was the vesture of balanced and rhythmic design and orchestral colour woven by the skill and taste of the artist to give this apprehension expression. And, as only through pictorial beauty could this be attained in painting, design, colour and handling became of paramount importance. That, at least, is how I read a picture like *The Coming of St. Columba*. At first sight seemingly no more than a specially vivid and beautiful rendering of a lovely and passing effect in nature, it has within this apparent ordinariness the glory of imagination, which comes, like Wordsworth's transfiguration of the every-day and the commonplace, through the affections—"felt in the blood and felt along the heart." Keeping close to nature, the imaginative faculty of the artist has at the same time evoked a sense of the vital and spiritual essence of reality, through rhythmic beauty of design, loveliness of colour—a shining and high-pitched harmony of gleaming silver and grey, and tender, indefinite blues playing into soft, sheeny greens, shot with recurring accents of rose and tawny and gold—and expressiveness of handling, in which every touch is alive with significance. Radiant and serene, yet vital with energy, a picture such as this conforms to Aristotle's definition of the beautiful in art—"the shining of the idea through a sensuous medium."

It was not all at once that McTaggart attained this



McTAGGART
THE COMING OF ST. COLUMBA

expressive power. He began with a style careful and delicately precise in both observation and execution. From that he passed in the 'seventies to the expressive breadth and subtler unity of *The Young Fishers*, in which, compared with other pictures of the period in the gallery, the suggestion of brilliant and vibrating light is much greater ; and then, in complete maturity, sacrificing the things he esteemed of less account to those essential to his purpose, to such rapturous captures of life and beauty as the radiant water-colour *Whins in Bloom* or the great, gleaming, sea-piece just discussed. It is perhaps worth while pointing out that McTaggart was an accomplished figure-painter, and at one time painted fine portraits, like the beautiful head and shoulders *Mrs. Leiper*, which is dated 1872. Nearly all his landscapes are enriched with figures. In his earlier pictures, of which his diploma work, *Dora*, is typical, these incidents are almost as important as the countrysides or seashores in which they were set ; but later they became less important in themselves and were frequently swamped in the more cosmic impressionism of his later years.

Amongst McTaggart's fellow-students in the Trustees' Academy, John MacWhirter and Peter Graham devoted themselves to landscape, and, going to London, attained great popularity, if not lasting reputation. The former had, however, a genuine gift for harmonising colour in a high key,

and the latter, before success formalised his treatment, brought considerable freshness to bear upon McCulloch-like Highland or Thomson-like coast scenes. G. P. Chalmers (1833-78), who is perhaps chiefly known as a painter of figures, either of the domestic-genre kind or portraits, also excelled in landscape, in which he revealed the finely artistic qualities already noted in connection with *The Legend* and *Modesty*. As may be seen in *The Eagle's Nest*, his landscape remained low in tone and exhibits a preference for rich, deep harmonies of colour. Yet a sensitive feeling for atmosphere, not very common before that time, envelops his effects, which are usually broadly conceived and frequently pregnant with poetic feeling and a touch of mystery. Thus Chalmers's landscape was—though in less degree than McTaggart's—a link between the older Scottish school and the more modern, with its inclination to impressionistic statement and aerial ensemble.

In some degree much the same could be said of the art of Cecil Gordon Lawson (1851-82), who, although born in England and doing most of his work there, was the son of Scottish parents. Cecil Lawson derived from Rubens and Constable rather than from Claude or the Dutchmen, though he is said to have studied the pictures of the latter in the National Gallery with close attention. In breadth and nobility of style his work is related to the Old

Masters, but his feeling for nature, while concerned with broad effects rather than actual facts, was modern and personal. Moreover, he was a powerful painter and a potent colourist, attaining at times, within his chosen and restricted gamut of blue, green, and russet or of gold, red, and brown, rather splendid harmonies. In the former vein the *Surrey Landscape* is a very charming example, for not only the colour but the idea is contagiously lovely. To look at the white cloud soaring into the blue, above the softly rolling countryside, hovering between blue and green-gold, in this little picture is to be thrilled with something of the ecstasy its painter must have experienced to put it and its pictorial relations down thus. In its different way *The Old Mill, Sunset*, though more passionate, is almost as characteristic. On the verge of melodrama, the painter's instinct for appropriateness saves it from that, but leaves the sense of drama (suggested by the battered old mill and the one tall pine against the glowing but darkening sunset) implicit in the arresting design, powerful brushwork, and rich colour-scheme of low-toned orange, crimson, and black-brown. Lawson's influence upon his English contemporaries was small, but in Scotland, where, in Glasgow specially, his pictures were frequently seen and greatly admired, it had a distinct effect on the work of the "Glasgow School" during the eighteen-eighties.

EG

In the art of Sir J. Lawton Wingate (1846-1923), the only landscape-painter who has been President of the Royal Scottish Academy, the feeling is purely lyrical. Design interested him, but was a less spontaneous and distinguished element in his gift than response to the visual loveliness of nature. Subtle modulation of tone, delicate play of brushwork, and a sense of colour in which brilliant hues glow through a pervading aerial harmony, without unduly asserting themselves, give charm to his work on the technical side and were the means through which he chiefly expressed his very personal sentiment. His pictures are reminiscent of all times and seasons, but mostly of hours when winds are soft and nature smiles: often they communicate the thrill of intimate emotional contact with nature. The three examples in the collection are, in their different ways, characteristic of his gifts. Wingate had a sense of values, but used them æsthetically rather than in a representational way, and after about 1880, when his art reached approximate maturity, he painted broadly and suggestively in what, in a loose sense, may be described as an impressionist manner. Less poetic in mood but full of delicate observation, the pastoral landscape of W. D. McKay, seen advantageously in *Springtime*, belongs to the same phase of Scottish painting.

In the woodland setting and envelopment of the figures in J. E. Christie's *Pied Piper*, referred to in

the preceding chapter, values are used in a more precise and conscious way, for by 1881, when that picture was painted, the cult of *plein air* had come. On the other hand, while E. A. Walton (1860-1922), like others of the Glasgow group in their early phase, was influenced by them, in *The Ford, New Abbey*, which represents his later style, they have become subordinate to the decorative effect, which was also an element in that movement and always an integral element in Walton's art. In tone and colour it also shows the increase in pitch, clarity, and coolness, which has marked Scottish painting as a whole increasingly since McTaggart set the example, and which brings it, while the old feeling for nature is retained, into line with some aspects of modern continental development. But its charm comes from the artist's delight in the blue and green and silver, the glistening sky, the still trees and the quiet water, of summer in the country, and the skill with which he has rendered the appeal of these things to him by working them into a finely balanced design.

CHAPTER V

SOME ENGLISH PICTURES

ALTHOUGH comparatively few in number, and too disparate to afford a connected survey of the achievement of the English school, the English pictures in the collection include several very notable works. Of these the most famous is Gainsborough's masterpiece, *The Hon. Mrs. Graham*, which, unlike some celebrated pictures, is as fascinating as it is famous. Moreover, a romantic story is associated with it.

One of the greatest beauties of her time, the Honourable Mary Cathcart, second daughter of the 9th Earl of that name, was married, when only seventeen, on the same day in December 1774 as her sister became Duchess of Atholl, to Thomas Graham of Balgowan, who was twenty-six. He was devoted to her, even rejoicing, it was said, in the little tyrannies through which she would at times show her power over him in public, and when, after eighteen years of married life, she died, he was left disconsolate. Unable to look upon her likeness again, he had this portrait—which had been painted on their return from their wedding trip abroad

and had been exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1777 as *Portrait of a Lady*—packed and stored, and set out to find distraction, if not forgetfulness, in the wars. Serving at first as a volunteer, he soon distinguished himself, and, after various services, obtained permanent military rank through the influence of Sir John Moore, whose aide-de-camp he was in the Corunna campaign. Thereafter he was one of Wellington's best and bravest generals in Spain, and in 1814 he was created a peer and became Baron Lynedoch. It was not until after his death in 1843 that Gainsborough's portrait of his wife was again seen. Mr. Robert Graham of Redgorton, his heir, was then informed by the storekeepers of the case left with them fifty years before. When it was opened a pair of satin slippers, which had belonged to her and had been placed there by her lover, were found with the picture, which in 1859 was bequeathed to the Gallery by Mr. Graham, on the condition that it should never leave Scotland. In the case also was a second portrait: the charming head and shoulders, which Gainsborough had executed at the same time as a study or sketch for the full-length. That is now in the Widener Collection in America. The unfinished full-length, almost in monochrome, known as *The Housemaid*, painted by Gainsborough in 1778 and now in the London Gallery, is also a portrait of her.

But this pathetic little story of enduring and

unsullied affection, while it enhances interest through association, does not create, or even add to, the fascination of the picture. That originated in the artist's response to the beauty of his sitter, and lives in the purely pictorial beauty which he evoked by his fine taste and skill and his exquisite sense of harmony and proportion. Compared with his great rival, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88) was esteemed a successful likeness-maker, and prided himself upon the truth of his portraits, and, though neither had to compete with the obvious, but often superficial, verisimilitude of the camera, we may take it that the picture suggests Mrs. Graham's character and perpetuates her actual beauty. Yet as she stands there in her shimmering white satin gown opening over a rose-red quilted petticoat, holding her head with dignity, and with an adorable touch of hauteur hovering on her lovely face, and leaning gracefully against the pedestal of a double column on the edge of a twilight woodland, while the allure of her gracious presence vitalises the sentiment and humanises it, the high and pensive beauty of the harmony, attained so subtly yet so spontaneously by the artistry of the painter, holds a haunting sense that here delicate but evanescent loveliness has been captured and set down in terms which make it not only permanent but give it a new and different beauty. For it is one of the greatest fascinations of vital art, that,



GAINSBOROUGH
THE HON. MRS. GRAHAM

without doing violence to appearances, it transmutes reality and gives it more poignant emotional significance by using it as the basis for creating another kind of beauty which expresses, as the imitation of nature cannot, the aspiration of men to give external expression to the imaginative promptings and the desire for beauty which lie deeply embedded in the human spirit.

This portrait of Mrs. Graham is a case to the point. Not only the scale of figure to background and the gracious silhouette of the former against the latter, but the proportion and quality of the faintly flushed pearly flesh and of the delicate shimmering white and red of the costume in relation to the lower tone and deeper colour of the setting (a relationship false in lighting to reality, it may be noted), the infective charm of the graceful, if somewhat faulty, drawing, the ease and suavity of the brushwork, and the delightful texture of the fused paint surfaces, whether smooth or loaded, count in the pictorial effect they make and issue in that harmony between idea and presentation which all art of a high order possesses. It is the combination in almost perfect equipoise of personal emotion, expressive technique, and significant design which creates the special atmosphere of Mrs. Graham's portrait and makes it a great and memorable masterpiece.

Gainsborough is at his highest in this full-length

of Mrs. Graham, whose beauty evidently prompted him to a deeper and completer expression of his personal feeling for pictorial beauty than he attained in anything else he ever painted, but a second delightful full-length in the collection, if less perfect and exquisite, is also typical of his fineness of perception and even more characteristic of his technique. Painted about 1786, some ten years later than the other, the *Mrs. Hamilton Nisbet* shows more obviously that spontaneous feathery touch by which Gainsborough, whose instinctive inclination was towards landscape, usually evoked the subtle suggestion of evanescent beauty which he had so triumphantly attained by the more deliberate path of completeness in the *Mrs Graham*. The colour-scheme, the motive of which is the mauvish purple of the dress against the green of trees, is also of great interest, for it makes a cool yet lovely harmony unusual in English portraiture of the eighteenth century, in which the tones were apt to be too chill or over-warm.

If Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) is less splendidly shown, one of the portraits by him is marked by a captivating tenderness and possesses a delicate flower-like beauty all its own. Painted in 1759, when he was thirty-six and *Lady Frances Scott*, the sitter, was nine, it is a work of his early maturity and shows the accomplishment and richness of his technique and the high sense of beauty which

inform his art at its best. The impasto is delightful in quality. Creamy in texture, but fluid, and not unduly loaded, it has been wrought into a softly luminous and close-knit surface of peculiar charm. Slightly faded in its flesh tints, as nearly all his pictures of that period are (as contrasted with his later, in which fullness of colour and richness of tone were often obtained by treacherous means), a delicate flush of pink, culminating in the cheeks and sealed by the red of the lips, suffuses the clear pearly tints of face and breast and, with the lightish brown hair, the dress of creamy white, turning to lovely greys in the shadows, and the cloak of blue, paling to silver in the lights and darkening to cool purple in the shadows, forms with the warm-toned, simple background, hovering between brown and green, a perfectly balanced colour-scheme. With this pictorial and wholly unpretentious charm, the simplicity of the child, standing with slightly inclined head, on which the light falls broadly and with little shadow, and leaning her right elbow on a pedestal in a way that gives a soft rhythm to the design, is in complete harmony. He painted lovelier and more seraphic children than this deliciously shy, but not specially pretty, girl, and there are more beautiful and nobler works in the long series of portraits of lovely women and distinguished men he left as a record of his time and of his remarkable talent, in which intellectual and æsthetic qualities are

subtly blended ; but hardly ever, except in the delightful full-length of another child of the same family, Lady Caroline Scott, as *Winter*, in which, as has been said, he forgot all about the Old Masters, did he surpass it in intimate charm or evoke more pictorial beauty from such a simple theme.

As the other portraits by Reynolds here (there is a specially fine head of the later period in the Portrait Gallery) belong to about the same time and show his art to rather less advantage, it is unnecessary to discuss them in detail, nor need we linger over the portraits by Hoppner, Lawrence, or Opie. But two small portraits by William Hogarth (1697-1764) deserve more than a passing reference. If less intriguing than the subject-pictures on which his popular fame rests, they are instinct with those painter-like qualities which make his social satires and his ironic moralities, levelled at the foibles and vices of his day, not only entertaining commentary or improving narrative, but fine works of art. He had more than a zest for life and a turn for graphic expression. He was an admirable designer, an expressive draughtsman, and a highly accomplished craftsman in paint, and these things, while adding point to his reflections of life, give his pictures artistic distinction and a lasting interest above and beyond their subject-matter. Yet the ultimate rank of a painter is determined by the combination of qualities in his

work. So Hogarth's power of characterisation and narrative, united to his technical gifts, gives his achievement its special quality and makes it essentially English in spirit. In it the strong racial sense of reality asserts itself in painting for the first time, and the inclination to narrative or dramatic situation, which has been a feature of much subsequent British painting, takes definite pictorial form.

If more apparent in his genre or conversation pieces, these qualities are clearly evident in two portraits in the Gallery. Cabinet full-lengths of Sarah Malcolm, a murderess in a cell in Newgate awaiting execution, and Viscount Boyne, a dandy posing with affected elegance in a park, they are typical of the naturalness of his style and the wit of his commentary, of his fine feeling for design and colour, and of his deft and spirited handling. If small in size, they are large in manner. The *Sarah Malcolm* especially has a breadth of conception and a rich unity of tone which make it a masterpiece in its kind. Coincident with the production of *The Rake's Progress*, it was painted when Reynolds was ten and Gainsborough six years old.

Seventeen years after Hogarth, the first distinctively English genre painter, Richard Wilson (1714-82), the first fine landscape-painter of the English school, was born in Wales of Welsh parents. Trained as a figure-painter, it was not until he was

in Rome practising portraiture that he turned his attention to landscape. At that time and in that environment, he could scarcely escape being a disciple of Claude. Yet, much as he learned from the work of that great master of classic landscape, Richard Wilson was essentially himself. While his design is less learned and less perfectly balanced than Claude's, he composed with quiet distinction in less broken masses, and, although owing something to Claude's example in treatment of light also, the atmosphere and sentiment of his landscape are his own. Magisterial and aloof from reality, though ambiently atmospheric and packed with subject-matter, Claude's art, with its suggestion of classic myth or Virgilian pastoral, was serene in spirit, elevated in mood and dignified in style. Wilson's, if broader in handling and less informed in structure and detail, had its own distinction of rhythm and tone, and mingled solemnity and a touch of glamour with the haunting tranquillity which, despite some dramatic pieces, is his habitual mood and gives his pictures their special appeal. No doubt much of his magic was due to the painter's temperament, with its Celtic strain; but it exists for us very largely through his subtle sense of pictorial tone and the delightful quality of texture and surface he obtained through the way in which he used paint to express those elements in the beauty of nature that stirred him most. In the *River Scene with Figures*

one sees his deficiencies in the rendering of form, for neither rocks nor trees are informed by a real feeling for structure ; but the rhythm of the design is at once delightful and dignified, the tones are rich and full, the colour, if abstract and non-representational, charming in itself and suggestive of the softened splendour which wraps the ensemble in glamoured repose.

If Wilson's genuine feeling for nature was in some degree overlaid by the classical convention, of which he made such fine use, J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), the greatest English landscape-painter, using that convention also, illumined it not only by deeper understanding of nature but by an imaginative power which makes his art in many ways the greatest landscape-painting in the world. Pregnant with this spirit but belonging to the transition years, when, after learning from and measuring himself against Claude and Poussin, Ruisdael and Cuyp, and other acknowledged masters of landscape, in a series of broadly conceived, deep-toned, and splendidly designed pictures, he was beginning to attach ever-increasing importance to those qualities of colour associated with brilliant light and actual sunshine on which his later developments were based, the *Somer Hill, Tonbridge*, painted in 1810, is a central rather than a typical example of his art. In it he appears at once free from rivalry with his predecessors and unobsessed by the golden visions

of light into which he was later to transfigure earth and sea and sky. It is not a weightily classical, a strikingly dramatic, or a poetically visionary Turner, and so disappointing to some. Yet all these elements enter into this singularly quiet and unassertive picture and make it one of the most delightful and satisfying of his works. Moreover, this landscape of quiet water, over which swallows skim, and meadow and wooded parkland, with browsing cattle, sweeping gently to a rise, on which a country house and not a castle stands, under a tranquil sky suffused with evening light, is the very quintessence of English life as it then was and of England as it still remains. To capture the spirit of place thus is to have the vision of a poet, and to set it down, using the resources of classical composition so that, while shaping the design, they do not seem to exist, and a technique so delicate yet so decisive in touch that the paint, delightful as it is in itself, seems but the atmosphere through which things are seen, is to be not only a gifted but a supreme craftsman.

Yet, greatly as I admire the finest of Turner's earlier works, amongst which *Somer Hill* ranks high, to me personally the great creative symphonies in light and colour of his later years, if more disturbing, make more moving and profounder appeal. Unfortunately no fine oil-picture of that period belongs to the Gallery, but the month of January each year

is made radiant there by the exhibition of the splendid series of water-colours bequeathed in 1901 by Mr. Henry Vaughan. It includes fine drawings of every period and style, but culminates in *Heidelberg* (c. 1840), one of the most glorious and elusive renderings of the magical spell of sunset ever wrought by the hand of man.

By John Constable, Turner's greatly gifted contemporary, but scarcely his rival, for, like Wilson, he was little appreciated in his lifetime, Edinburgh has only a sketch, which, if suggesting his very personal feeling for English landscape and his acute sense of weather, gives no adequate idea of his powers or of the great influence his example as a "natural painter" had upon subsequent painting. But the chiefs of the Norwich school, John Crome and John Sell Cotman, are admirably represented. Experts have differed about the attribution of *A Heath—Sunset* to the former, but, nevertheless, it is an admirable landscape, certainly inspired, if not painted, by him, and bearing his impress in mood and style. Of the *Scene in Wales* there is no doubt, and perhaps, next to the stately *Slate Quarries* in the Tate Gallery, it is the most beautiful and impressive of the few pictures in which, deserting the wooded lanes and ponds and rolling heaths of his native Norfolk, he painted the austerity and strength of rock-piled hills. Very simple in design and weighty in its suggestion of mass,

the colour-scheme of silver, grey, and cool brown is also significantly expressive.

A group of small pictures and a number of beautiful water-colours show Cotman near high-water mark. The influence of the traditional Dutch landscape technique, which Crome had modified to express his simple but profound feeling for nature, is less evident in Cotman, whose design is rather classical in its largeness of gesture and grave distinction. He had, besides, a very individual apprehension of reality, and seemed to find beauty in, or else turned to beauty, through the alchemy of his art, the simplest themes. From a rather dilapidated group of houses such as *Lakeham Mill*, or *Buildings by a River*, or a clump of dark trees beside a grassy slope, as in *The Meadow*, he could evoke a picture instinct with dignity and pregnant with fresh and poignant beauty. There is more than a rare instinct for pictorial design, a distinguished and unusual use of simple colour and tone, and an exceptional sensitiveness to the material loveliness obtainable in oil-paint in these pictures; but what that is, except John Sell Cotman himself, it would be difficult to say.

In conclusion, amongst a few more modern works, attention may be called to the seated three-quarter length of Lady Agnew of Lochnaw, by John S. Sargent (1856-1925). His gift was different in kind from that of Reynolds or Gainsborough.

They were more or less direct inheritors of the great decorative convention in portraiture which had been acclimatised in England by Van Dyck, and into which, each in his own way, they had breathed something racial and distinctive, respect for character and the spirit of the eighteenth century to which they belonged. It was a stately convention, and they used it nobly and with exquisite taste to express an elevated and sympathetic view of human nature and their personal feelings for beauty. A certain amount of conventionality in treatment and of generalisation in characterisation were involved, and tended to merge individual likeness in a type. For this, however, there was often more than compensation in the invention of a pose and setting which suggested by symbol an imaginative connection between a sitter's appearance and his character. Sargent's relationship to his sitters was different. He was an objective painter, and more dependent upon the visual aspect of his subject in an actual setting, and the immediate appeal this happened to have for him. If a certain range of marked types interested him and others did not, and the result of this appears in the greater or less vitality of his work, he saw with wonderful clarity, if limited sympathy, and had at command a technique of the *premier coup* kind, which enabled him to set down what he saw with extraordinary élan and certainty. So his portraits are often

vividly individualised, and his actual painting is very often brilliant and fascinating in its mastery. In these respects he recalls Raeburn rather than the English masters.

An American, born in Italy, trained in France, and working much in England, and frequently in America, Sargent was what may be called cosmopolitan in outlook, and his art is rather an expression of the wider modern attitude, which draws no frontiers in painting, than of any particular school, though the English tradition in portraiture gradually affected his style and made it seem quite at home here. The portrait of Lady Agnew, if it combines quietude with vitality in a way exceptional in his work, and possesses a more than usually interesting and harmonious colour-scheme, is a very fine example of his qualities, and in the brilliance of its realism forms a fascinating foil to the richly decorative ensemble and more spiritual and poetic beauty of Gainsborough's *Mrs. Graham* or Reynolds's *Lady Frances Scott*.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY ITALIAN PICTURES

COMPARED with great cosmopolitan collections like those in London, Paris, or Berlin, each with its series of notable early works, or even with the minor galleries in Italy or Flanders, where masterpieces of the local schools are frequently found, the collection of "primitives" in Edinburgh is small and unimportant. Yet it contains a number of typical and charming early pictures, from which a not inadequate idea of the characteristics of what is called "primitive" painting can be obtained. For the most part they are either Italian or Flemish in origin, though there are two or three fine German works and a *quattrocento* Spanish panel of exceptional quality. Moreover, as it was in Italy and Flanders that the most distinctive groups of primitive painters emerged, one is able, to some extent, to compare the characteristics of Southern and Northern European painting in its early stages, and learn something of the genesis of the respective schools before they attained maturity.

Art, in its most distinctive and significant phases, being an expression of the aspirations and ideals of men, has always been intimately related to religion, and, throughout the epoch in European history usually described as mediæval, and during the early Renaissance which followed, this connection was especially close. It was employed by the Christian Church to tell the story of its foundation and the legends of its saints. So almost all the pictures and sculptures which survive from these periods are of sacred subjects and were dedicated to religious uses.

In the dark ages, which followed the division of the Roman Empire in 395 and the successive invasions of Northern barbarians during the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., which brought ruin to Italy and almost extinguished the Latin culture which had spread from Rome over Western Europe, the arts sank to a low ebb. Meantime in Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Empire—removed from these disasters and with a Church of its own—there had grown up a new style, which, while related to early Christian art, possessed distinctive qualities and characteristics in which European and Eastern elements were combined. In essence this Byzantine art was symbolic, and, very early, its forms became rigid, and chilled all vital artistic expression outside decorative effect.

Italy, struggling to independent life again after her eclipse, was influenced by Byzantine art, both through the icons, ivories, and metal-work imported and the "Greek" artists who migrated there to practise their crafts. But if Byzantine art, with its rigid formulas and decorative convention, was the stem upon which Italy's blossoming was grafted, it was not its source of life. That lay in the awakening life and hope of Italy (in many ways stimulated by St. Francis and his message of cheerful goodwill), and received a great impulse from the new Gothic art, with its sense of reality and movement in sculpture and architecture, which had emerged amongst the non-Latin races on the other side of the Alps.

The effect of these new stirrings in art first became visible in sculpture, where the influence of Gothic example was potent, but towards the close of the thirteenth century it began to appear in painting also. Duccio of Siena and Cimabue of Florence were the pioneers, and round them, and following in their footsteps, the Sienese and Florentine schools, the greatest and most distinctive in early Italian painting, came into being. In Duccio's work the rigid conventions of Byzantine art began to be suffused with a more human, if still magisterial, spirit; but it was not until the advent of Giotto (1266-1337) that Florentine

painting began to emerge as a distinctive and vital school.

As regards technical and pictorial qualities, the immediately succeeding developments owed much to monkish illuminators, and were also influenced by what had survived in practice from Roman and Græco-Roman mural decoration. So, while much of the finest and most important works of the fourteenth and fifteenth, and even the sixteenth, centuries were carried out in fresco on freshly-laid plaster on the walls, in the altar-pieces, painted in studios, one can see the gold and clear colours of the illuminators (the translucent brilliance of Gothic-painted windows was likewise an influence) and the flat decorative effects of the fresco-painters transferring themselves, so to speak, from vellum page or plastered wall to the gesso-faced wood panels upon which early pictures were painted in tempera, a medium of yolk of egg mixed with water.

These influences and tendencies are apparent in most of the pictures in Room I. In the Florentine panels of the school of Giotto (*c.* 1350), which are the earliest pictures in the collection, and the Sienese *Adoration of the Magi*, which is only a little later in date, one can see quite clearly the influence of mediæval illuminations in the miniature-like character of the design, the use of gold and clear, bright colour, and the naïve and child-like telling



ROSSETTI
ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

of the story. The difference between Florentine and Sienese art, again, is marked by the greater sense of reality, even while the setting remains purely conventional and symbolic, in the way the incidents are set down and given some degree of narrative, as well as decorative, unity in the former. In both, however, design was based upon the shape and spacing of coloured masses of different intensity, defined by linear contour and with little shadow, and already the delight in richness of pattern and detail and the joy in stately pageantry, which were to mark the developments that followed, were beginning to appear.

While painting in Italy passed out of the more archaic phases (which alone can be described as "primitive" in the strict sense) prior to 1400, the art of the next century continued to combine primitive characteristics with the more accomplished execution and greater knowledge gradually added by a succession of gifted artists. Sienese painting, indeed, retained to a great extent the static and decorative convention which Duccio, its founder and its greatest master, had endowed with a remote and calm sense of life and deeper spiritual meaning. None of his followers in the fifteenth century equalled him in serenity and majesty; but Matteo di Giovanni—represented here by one of his finer works, a *Madonna and Saints*,

which once belonged to John Ruskin—made a somewhat nearer approach to reality, and his faintly-smiling madonnas and tranquil saints against a patterned background of pale gold have a less aloof charm of their own. Sano de Pietro, sometimes called the Sienese Fra Angelico, another notable master of that time, is also seen in a delightful and characteristic picture, the *Coronation of the Virgin*.

Since the fall of Rome, Italy had had no national existence, and in mediæval times, and for long afterwards, it was divided into rival duchies and republics. Siena, withdrawn from the great highways, perched on her triple spur of the Tuscan hills, and glowing soft red and gold in the sunset, then as now, had its own communal life, its own dreams and ambitions, and its own art. In Florence—set in the rich valley of the Arno, and a centre of commerce, industry, and finance—life ran a swifter and more agitated course, both in the city and as affected by outside relationship, and thought probed more deeply into life and was eager in pursuit of learning and the investigation of natural phenomena. So there, the Renaissance, foreshadowed by Duccio and Cimabue, came to full flower.

Already the frescoes of Giotto had given a lead to an art more closely related to life than that of his famous predecessors, for the old conventions

had expanded in his hands and had taken from his imagination a vitality and significance which still holds a potent charm. Even in the Giottesque panels, already referred to, one can see this quickened sense of reality in the way the stories are told, in the figure action, and in the settings.

In the eager and intellectual atmosphere of Florence in the fifteenth century, encouraged by the Medici and stimulated by the revival of learning, the growing knowledge of classic civilisation, and the discovery of ancient statues and monuments, painting and sculpture made rapid progress. Portraits became more frequent, allegories of human life and of the vices and the virtues, and, more rarely, classical myths, dressed in Renaissance thought and costume, began to be painted. But, at the same time, the "primitive" delight in bright colour, modified by a subtler sense of harmony and preference for shadowless effect, persisted, and the child-like love for pageantry, expressed in religious and daily life through festivals and processions, continued active. Evidence of these tendencies, or some of them, appear in several pictures in the collection. Thus the *Burial of St. Zenobius* (c. 1425) shows very happily incident and landscape combined with charming decorative effect; the delightful Cassone panel *Coronation of a Prince* (probably David anointed king after the slaughter of the

Amalekites), in three continuous scenes, by Jacopo del Sellaio (1441-93), is as much pageant and procession as narrative ; and *Christ on the Road to Calvary*, by a follower of Benozzo Gozzoli (1420-98), shows the influence of the artist of delicate fancy and playful inventiveness, who has been described as " the most exquisite and naïve storyteller of the Renaissance." The tendency to greater realism again appears in a little *Last Supper*, of the school of Castagno (c. 1450), which is related in general design to his great fresco of that subject in Florence and reveals the impress of his inclination to stress facial expression and dramatic gesture, in pursuit of vigour and significance. It also gives a vitality to the rendering of character and the drawing of the figures in the beautiful tempera, *St. Catherine*, by Cosimo Rosselli (1439-1507), which its blond, fresco-like quality of surface and tone scarcely prepares one for, and even marks the way in which the two St. Johns are individualised in the panel attributed to Machiavelli, where the old convention of a gilded background is retained. Painted about the same time (1500) as the master's *Nativity* in the London Gallery, *The Infant Jesus*, which repeats with marked variations the central episode in that famous work, is assigned to the school of Botticelli. It is very close to the master, and the design at least must be his, for, in addition to many alterations and the increase in scale, it is

too self-contained in conception and too homogeneous and balanced in arrangement to be merely a studio adaptation. In any case, this charming picture, with its personal sentiment for beauty, in which, as it were, spirit shines through body, its delightful sense of rhythm in line and mass, and its feeling hovering between rapture and serenity, brings one pretty near the exquisite and distinguished art of Botticelli.

Of other Italian schools, for each centre had its own distinctive qualities and preferences, that of Ferrara is represented by a *Madonna and Child with Angels* (c. 1460), probably by Francesco del Cossa, one of its most distinguished painters, and the *Madonna and Child with St. Francis and St. Jerome*, by Leonardo Scaletti of Faenza, who was closely allied to it. In the former—a work so well preserved that it gives an unusually clear idea of the actual handling—the somewhat fantastic inventiveness of the Ferrarese is clearly evident, and the latter, in design and in the tendency to hard and crinkly draperies especially, is also characteristic of their qualities. But from a technical point of view special interest attaches to the unfinished *Madonna Enthroned*, by Cima da Conegliano, (1459–1517), who was associated with the Venetian group in which Bellini was chief. Here one can almost see a North Italian painter of about the year 1500 at work. For on the smooth, white

ground of gesso (a mixture of plaster of Paris or whitening and glue), Cima had first drawn and shaded in tempera monochrome his figures and landscape, and then, over that, was in the act of working in colour with oil when, for some reason, the picture was laid aside. So from the untouched ground to almost completed passages, such as the Virgin's head and the Child's figure, the progress of an early Italian picture from start to finish is before us.

The more decorative convention noted in Italian fourteenth-century pictures is seen again in the Spanish panel *St. Michael*, painted about 1425. Here, however, the thought is less poignant and the appeal almost entirely æsthetic. *St. Michael* spears the Devil without even looking at it, as if it were a daily event and involved neither struggle nor triumph. But this not very thrilling rendering of a great spiritual contest is made the opportunity for a very rich and beautiful piece of decoration, and no doubt, as part of a reredos or screen in a chapel, filled with other similar panels, it served a religious function in creating an atmosphere of splendid solemnity. Divorced from that setting, little but its own inherent decorative beauty remains. The design, with the armoured and dark-winged figure against the gold, tooled background, in the upper part of the picture and the brown landscape below, is delightful in contour and in play of line,

and the combination of gold and deep-toned, simple colour-masses is very beautiful. So, as indeed many primitive European works do, the broad and simple decorative effect reminds one of early Oriental pictures.

CHAPTER VII

EARLY FLEMISH PICTURES

A HUNDRED years later than in Italy, dating from Giotto rather than Duccio, a new and entirely different school of painting emerged in Flanders. It came with what seems to us dramatic suddenness, for there are no known precursors, except the glass painters and the miniaturists, and it attained mastery and maturity almost at once. Associated with it, too, was a new medium which, putting enhanced powers of representation in the hands of painters, was destined to exert enormous influence on the art. It is true, of course, that oil had been used as a vehicle for mixing powdered colours much earlier than the Van Eycks, but their method or their mixture of oils or both evidently gave it undreamt-of possibilities and the prestige of a wonderful new discovery.

While the Flemish school had thus a different medium from the Italian until, towards the close of the fifteenth century, oil-paint began to be used in Italy also, instead of tempera, for easel pictures, the themes painted were very similar and, as in

Italy, predominantly religious. In temper and treatment, however, there were clearly marked differences, made more evident, perhaps, through the greater material richness and more fused effects obtainable in the new medium. Owing to Gothic architecture, with its great windows filled with painted glass, not providing space for mural decoration on a grand scale, painting in Flanders, and the adjoining countries where Gothic prevailed, was from its emergence essentially that of the studio, and closely related to the cabinet-picture. Even the great Flemish altar-pieces, such as the famous *Adoration of the Lamb*, by the Van Eycks (Hubert *d.* 1426 : Jan *d.* 1441), now happily brought together again in the Church of St. Bavon in Ghent, for which it was originally painted, often consisted of a series of what may be called easel pictures, dealing with different episodes in one subject, given decorative unity by being set in an elaborate Gothic reredos or architectural frame. This deprived Northern painters of the stimulus to grandiose or broadly effective decorative design, which mural painting supplied in Italy and which helped to give Renaissance art there the note of nobility which is one of its chief distinctions.

But beyond these external conditions, as they might be called, was a notable difference in temper. This had already shown itself in the feeling for life and movement and the tendency to elaboration

and profusion in Gothic architecture and sculpture during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Compared with the great Italians of the fourteenth-hundreds, the great Flemings, who, it ought to be pointed out, were technically superior to their immediate contemporaries in Italy, were realists. They had perhaps less joy in life, and they took less delight in beauty of person, circumstance and setting, or in the loveliness or nobility which art could make by using these things as elements in stately design. On the other hand they observed life more closely, had a greater relish for character and the appearances of nature, and much greater skill and more finesse and patience in the representation of purely visual things. So, while there is little beauty in Flemish or German Adams and Eves, who are apt to be rather awkward and ashamed naked men and women, little loveliness in Flemish Madonnas, who are patient and maternal rather than ecstatic and adoring in their love of the Holy Child, and scarcely any touching and symbolic dignity, though often the rigid starkness of death, in the body of our Lord taken down from the Cross or carried to the tomb, the actual rendering of the figures and facts in the scene is often instinct with a remarkable regard for human nature and natural effect.

This apprehension of actuality is often expressed with great skill and refinement of handling. The

faces are very carefully drawn and modelled, and sometimes very sympathetically characterised, and the small portraits by Jan Van Eyck and by Memling are amongst the greatest portraits ever painted. The textures of clothes and furs, brocades and Eastern carpets, and the details of church architecture or domestic interiors are rendered with remarkable accuracy, and, what is perhaps the clearest evidence of this special response to appearances, landscape is expressed with a fullness and truth of detail and effect quite new in painting. Moreover, the closely wrought and delicately-handled paint surface has a material richness and beauty which greatly enhances the colour effect, deepens the harmony, and forms an element in that beauty, different from things beautiful in themselves, which I have previously referred to as one of the distinctive qualities of art.

Although there are no examples of the great masters of this school in the Gallery, Edinburgh has in the two shutters (painted on both sides) of the Trinity College altar-piece, now in Holyrood, a masterpiece by Van der Goes (1435?–1482). There the fine accomplishment and profound characterisation in portraiture, revealed especially in the “donor” panel, and in the “Trinity” panel, in which the dead Christ lies on the Father’s knees and the Holy Dove flutters above in a golden glory, the treatment of a religious theme by one of the most notable

early Flemings may be studied. But certain of the Flemish qualities just discussed appear in some of the pictures here. A little *Pieta*, attributed to Petrus Christus (1410-73), has not only poignancy of feeling in the Virgin holding the tensely expressive body of her dead son at the foot of the cross, but shows in a very charming way the Flemish feeling for landscape in a scene of woodland and water with a mediæval town on a hill in the distance under a tender sky, all painted with wonderful delicacy and truthfulness; and in an admirably designed and firmly painted picture of a Madonna and Child before a traceried window, there is another delightful glimpse of landscape seen in that quiet diffused light of which early painters were so fond. Rather later than these, the *Deposition*, a fine triptych by Joos van Cleef (1485-1540), the painter so long known as "The Master of the Death of the Virgin," is the most notable Flemish work in the collection. There is in it perhaps some indication of the Italian influence which, during the sixteenth century, gradually deprived painting in the Low Countries of much of its native virility and naturalism without giving in return the Italian feeling for dignity. But it is slight, and in conception and execution this picture remains characteristic of its school. The centre panel is admirably designed. The figures of the various actors in the taking down of the dead body of Christ are significant



JOOS VAN CLEEF
DEPOSITION FROM THE CROSS

in action, and the heads are expressive without over-stressed emotion, while the painting of the swooning Virgin and her deep-toned robes, falling in many folds, and other passages is in the finest native tradition. In the side panels again we have evidence in the kneeling figures of the donor and his wife of Van Cleef's fine gift for portraiture. Yet perhaps the most attractive element in the picture is the landscape of river, valley and hill, in blues and whites, browns and greens, which runs through all three compartments and gives the whole richness and decorative unity of effect.

In pure portraiture there is nothing of the quite early school; but a little head of the Emperor Charles V when a boy is an admirable example of Flemish art of about 1510, and portraits of a woman by Peter Pourbus, and of a man, attributed to Antonio More, but more probably of the Bruges school, (both dated 1565), show, in their clear, delicate drawing and refined yet assured handling, simple design and excellent characterisation, the persistence, well into the sixteenth century, of regard for individual character and searched workmanship. With these two little panels of the South German school (c. 1525) of donors and their children (the sons with the husband, the daughters with the wife), with a patron saint, may be bracketed. They have a close relationship to Flemish practice, both in conception and execution, and are in brilliant

condition, the paint surfaces being unfrayed and almost without a crack, and the colour retaining its pristine freshness and clarity.

Comparison of the Tuscan *Burial of St. Zenobius* with the Flemish *Pieta* by Petrus Christus shows the relation of incident to landscape and the feeling for and treatment of landscape in Italy and in Flanders respectively during the early fourteenth-hundreds, and, if the Florentine *Infant Jesus* is compared with the Bruges *Adoration of the Shepherds*, both of which date about 1500, the differences in mood of conception, feeling for beauty and character of design, which have been indicated, will in the same way be seen far more vividly than can be explained in words.

While adding variety and enriching the effect of this room of early pictures, a few pieces of sculpture remind us that art has never been confined to pictures, but has taken other forms equally beautiful and significant. The sculpture and painting of a period are always related, and act and react upon each other. Sometimes one gives the lead, sometimes the other; but, broadly speaking, they express somewhat the same intellectual or emotional ideas and æsthetic conventions, modified by the character and limitations of the material.

Italian sculpture of the great early period is not represented, but two or three pieces indicate the characteristics of Gothic work at different times. Of

these the earliest and most notable is a remarkable statuette of a Madonna and Child of the French school, which experts in such matters assign to the middle of the fourteenth century. Charming in sentiment, design, execution and material, the combination of these qualities makes it a peculiarly lovely thing, with that special touch of mingled reverence and naïveté, which is one of the distinctive qualities of early art. Yet it is even more in the treatment that the fascination lies. The erectness of the group, with its poise and silhouette of mass, gives dignity and impressiveness beyond what its 18½ inches would seem to promise, and these are heightened by the lovely treatment of the forms and the beauty of the intricate folds into which the draperies fall, while the surface texture has great charm, partly due to the carving and partly to the patina of time. In view of the character and finish, the suggestion has been made that it may be the work of an *imagier* in ivory rather than of a stone chiseller, and the slight horn-like curvature of the whole in profile lends support to that theory. Originally this Madonna had a metal crown; but, though traces of gilding remain in the hair of both mother and child, close examination reveals no evidence that the group was ever coloured. It should be pointed out also that, compared with Italian pictures of the trecento (Flemish painting scarcely existed then), a work such as this possesses a greater

sense of life and technical powers of a more advanced kind.

Belonging to the middle of the following century, the alabaster relief, *Coronation of the Virgin*, has the special interest of being a fine example of a phase of art which was distinctly English. Sculptured reliefs of this type and the embroideries known as *Opus Anglicanum*, were the two chief English art products exported during the Gothic period, and both were highly esteemed on the Continent. Nottingham was the centre of the sculpturesque activity, and the panel was the characteristic form. That in the Gallery is exceptionally delightful in design, the modelling expressive, and the carving nervously refined, especially in the figure of the Madonna, whose face shines with ecstasy, while the patina, though vestiges of polychroming remain, is lovely in quality.

The carved wood figure of St. Sebastian, of the Nuremberg school and perhaps by Veit Stoss, shows another aspect of religious art round about 1500. Most statues of this kind were coloured, and in the process lost something of the character of the carving and suffered in a sculpturesque sense. Here the colouring has been removed, and, as the actual carving was spirited, the handicraft of the sculptor is seen to advantage. The head is specially expressive, the face having real significance and the clustered, curling hair being rendered with incisive skill.

A fragment of a child Christ from a large marble Madonna group is probably a little later in date. Experts differ as to whether it is French of the late fifteenth century or Flemish of the early sixteenth, but whatever the final designation may be, it is a work of much skill and charm. Modelled with a vital sense of form, generalised yet subtly expressive, and with an exquisite feeling for poise, for the child sits with perfect balance upon the wrist and outspread fingers of the mother's hand, it is a peculiarly joyous and, it may perhaps be added, half mischievous expression of babyhood.

CHAPTER VIII

LATER ITALIAN PICTURES

As may be seen in the first room, increased interest in and power of representing appearances were perhaps the most marked differences between fourteenth and fifteenth-century painting. Until about 1500, light and shade entered little into pictorial effect, which continued to show the influence of mural painting, and beyond that of the classic bas-relief. After the introduction of the oil medium into Italy, however, chiaroscuro became a much more important element in design, which expanded from symmetrical composition in lineally defined colour-masses upon a flat surface, so to speak, recession having been expressed chiefly by decrease in size, to composition which, while remaining decorative and rhythmical, depended for balance and harmony more upon accent, tone, and envelopment than on repetition of form and relative size. The greater strength and volume of the new medium in itself and its freer technical processes also effected this evolution, if they did not indeed, in some degree, initiate it.

Painting thus attained a variety, richness, and fullness of effect it had not previously possessed, and, with these new possibilities, emotions, either new or now first liberated, were expressed. While greater power and variety of brush-work, deeper and more enveloping light and shade, and more resonant, if often more sombre, harmonies of colour brought new pictorial characteristics into painting, the results achieved reveal also a greater desire to capture an impression of life and movement in figures, express an increased feeling for bulk or volume in figures and setting, and, in a few cases, convey a new and wonder-working sensitiveness to atmospheric effect, with its imaginative implications. In this way art became less dependent upon ideas associated with the subject depicted, and stirred the emotions and appealed to the imagination more directly through actual visual effects produced by qualities inherent in the medium.

It is seldom that we have progress without some loss, and the painting of the full Renaissance, if more splendid, powerful, and suggestive, lacks the serenity, the static but rapt beauty, the naïve intimacy, and the untroubled faith, which are amongst the abiding charms of earlier art. This difference was not due primarily to technical considerations, however, but arose from a change in intellectual interests and religious conceptions. Gradually the humanistic spirit—penetrated by the revival of learning,

increasing knowledge of Greek and Roman civilisation and pagan thought, and admiration for re-discovered classic art, with its love of the body's beauty—modified the Christian and monastic spirit, which had underlain mediæval art, and the art of the sixteenth century found inspiration in a combination of pagan joy in life and delight in beauty with Christian ideals. Below the surface the mystery of life and death, of the Nativity and the Crucifixion and the Day of Judgment still exercised an influence; but the renewal of the Græco-Roman feeling for abstract beauty permeated all Italian artistic effort and influenced its form profoundly

[As it happens, the only phase of the wonderful achievement of painting in Italy during the sixteenth century at all adequately shown in the Gallery (there are Florentine and other Italian drawings upstairs) is that which centred in Venice. There are, however, a few things of beauty and interest from elsewhere. Of these much the most important are the three wax models by Michelangelo for the famous statues in the Medici Chapel. Experts differ as to their authenticity: but it is generally admitted that they are contemporary; they bear a close resemblance to other models by the master in Florence and show certain variations from the marbles; and, after the lapse of four hundred years, a material, such as wax is, cannot bear on its surface the full impress of the initial modelling. Moreover, they are

not only reminiscent of great things, but impressive and beautiful in themselves. Here Lorenzo de Medici broods as deeply and darkly and Guiliano sits as quietly confident as they do in the life-size marbles; and the model of the great Madonna group, also in San Lorenzo, retains in little much of the austere beauty and the majestic and overpowering impressiveness which make it one of the greatest creations in the world.

There are marked differences between Venetian and Florentine painting. In the latter, from very early, interest in the more purely intellectual aspects of subject predominated, and found expression in searched drawing and design conceived upon a linear basis. These preferences had made Florence also the chief seat of sculpture in Italy from the middle of the fourteenth century. And, combined with the new sense of chiaroscuro and the increased feeling for volume, they persisted in Florentine art of the sixteenth century. On the other hand, Venetian painters of the great period which began with the Bellinis delighted chiefly in colour and atmosphere, and, conceiving events in their broad relationships of mass and tone, expressed their emotional conceptions in rich colour harmonies and mysteriously suggestive chiaroscuro, which spring the dominating mood upon the spectator in terms natural to painting.

Set in the sea, with her palaces and churches

rising from quivering waters, and overspread with splendid skies, which drop to mingle with the swaying, many-coloured reflections beneath, Venice herself must have influenced Venetian painting profoundly. The love of pageantry so closely associated with her communal life is reflected in the stately decorations of her splendid interiors, and the luminosity of atmosphere out of doors cannot but have had an effect upon her artists' special apprehension of colour. Indeed, one cannot stand upon the Piazzetta and watch the sunlight playing over the buildings and the lagoons without thinking of the clear, blond colouring of Veronese, or look towards the open down one of the side canals—deep in shadow, shot with bars of light, and framed on either side by the strong, vertical lines of tall houses—without thinking of the magic of Tintoretto's discovery of space.

Giovanni Bellini, the greatest of the early Venetians, is represented in a side-way, yet in a manner of great interest, by Nicolas Poussin's copy of the famous *Feast of the Gods*, now in America. Painted in 1514—at the end of his career, when he was tired of painting lovely but aloof Madonnas and revered but suffering or fasting saints, and his pupils, Giorgione and Titian, had already painted, the one, his exquisite pastorals with dreaming figures, and the other, many of his splendid landscape-set and joy-intoxicated mythologies—that picture is

very clear evidence of the triumph of Renaissance ideals. It is also in its combination of figure with landscape, and in the beauty of its landscape, typical of what was a special feature in Venetian art.

Titian is not represented; and the head and shoulders of *An Archer*, attributed to Giorgione, is not amongst the half-dozen—or is it only three?—accepted pictures by that painter. Yet it recalls his mood, and is touched with the spirit of dream-like beauty, the luminous depth of tone, and the richness of fused effect associated with his name. Moreover, by comparing it with a head in almost any Italian picture in Room I, one can see very clearly the increased and transforming part which tone was beginning to play in painting.

This is also apparent in several works by Veronese. Two of these are decorations woven round the Goddess of Love. At first sight the *Mars and Venus* seems over-dark in the background and somewhat indeterminate in design. As one looks, however, the darkness becomes transparent and full of form, and the centre group (detached here and there in clear luminous passages from the setting of dark foliage and deep twilight sky) assumes, with the deeper nuances of the shadows, a firmly balanced design, based on a closely wrought arabesque of echoing or contrasting shapes. By now the reticent colour-scheme has also become eloquent,

and one finds that what seemed darkness opposed to light is a profound harmony of indefinite yet lovely black or brownish darks, deep yellows, and low-toned flesh tints. The technique also, when examined, is masterly and highly characteristic in its breadth of handling and easy expressiveness of touch. Yet, although its authenticity has been questioned, the smaller *Venus and Adonis* is in many ways, apart from the actual painting, more characteristic of what one recognises as Veronese than the *Mars and Venus* or the stately group of a *Donor and his Patron Saint*, beside columns rising against a deep blue and white sky, which is an admirable and undoubted example of his portraiture. For here are the sweeping and rhythmical decorative design, so justly balanced within the picture space, the lovely silvery colour, and the clear, luminous tone which together make his essential quality. Possession of these render this picture, whether by Veronese or not, one of the most beautiful in the collection.

It is, however, in a picture by a lesser, but still a fine, master of the school that the distinctive Venetian characteristics are seen most clearly in Edinburgh. If Jacopo Bassano's masterpiece, *The Adoration of the Magi*, does not put him on the same plane as the greater men, in it he rises into the region of their achievement. Without losing the intimate and homely quality of his own conception



BASSANO
THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

of things—the countryman's feeling that these sacred events took place in the country and amongst its daily life and occupations—he here attains finer and more concentrated design, richer and more harmonious colour, and firmer and less conventional drawing and handling than elsewhere. It is rather from the stately breadth and balance of the whole than from any separate excellences that this picture makes such a deep impression. The Madonna and the Holy Child, with St. Joseph behind them, occupy the left of the canvas; the worshipping Magi fill the centre, with the figures set low and somewhat crouching, as often with him; the right is crowded with their followers, horses, and dogs. The figure-grouping, running continuously across the picture, is closely knit, but delightfully varied by differences in pose and action and changes of colour in the costumes, and the beautiful landscape setting is an integral part of the design and not merely a connecting background. This rich and balanced effect is based on related masses in which colour, tone, and form are a unity and not separate elements superimposed on one another; and its pictorial quality is much heightened by the skilful way in which the darker mass rhythms are accentuated by recurrent passages of white and blue.

Grave in mood, marked by regard for character, dignified in design, and rich in tone, the three-quarter

length of *A Senator* also shows Jacopo Bassano at his best. In these respects it may be taken as typical of Venetian portraiture—which is further represented by an acutely characterised and firmly painted bust of a man attributed to Tintoretto, remarkable in the quality of its blacks and the harmony between these and the head; a richly coloured and admirably balanced group of a lady with two attendants, by Paris Bordone; and the powerfully realised, kneeling, life-size figure of the Donor in the altar-piece wing by Veronese, previously mentioned.

With the passing of the group of great sixteenth-century painters, painting in Venice, and indeed in Italy, entered a long period of obscurity. The sunset had been glorious; but, in the murky twilight that followed fast upon it, only the dim figures of the eclectic school of Bologna and of the “naturalisti” of Naples can be descried. They were learned and talented; but the load of past greatness to which they were born lay heavily upon them, and their work lacks freshness of inspiration, spontaneity of expression, and vitality of appeal.

But for a while during the eighteenth century there was a rich flush of belated after-glow over the lagoons. Tiepolo was painting, with verve and fertility of invention, those sumptuous yet elegant decorative pictures of which there is no finer example anywhere than the *Finding of Moses*, which faces

the Bassano in the second room of the Gallery. He was not a dreamer of profound harmonies and noble compositions—which, while delightful in their sensuous beauty, express the deeper significance of the themes painted, religious or mythological—as Titian was; nor had he the imaginative gift and the poignant apprehension of life and its issues which underlay the passionately dramatic design and colour of Tintoretto and give his art such thrilling vitality, such haunting mystery. He was nearer Veronese both in idea and in style. Like him, though less noble in manner, he was a born decorator. If his stories are mere pretexts for pattern, his wonderful and unhesitating élan of handling, fine eye for colour, and facile, but extraordinarily effective, sense of picturesque grouping gave his mural paintings and pictures very great attractiveness and a beauty which, if lacking in spiritual appeal and intellectual significance, has elegance, sprightliness, and charm. Nowhere in his whole work are these qualities more active or more finely balanced than in our *Finding of Moses*. Neither the seeming anomaly of the fashionably-dressed eighteenth-century mondaine, who poses as Pharaoh's daughter, nor her old hag of a duenna, who must have walked straight from the Piazzetta into the canvas, need annoy us. It is a play that is being enacted pictorially for our amusement and delight, rather than an historical event that is being

related seriously for our instruction, and Tiepolo by his artistry has made from it a thing that is a lasting joy to the eye, both through the colour-pattern he has woven and the skill with which that pattern has been made. Much the same could be said of the lovely sketch for one of the Antony and Cleopatra panels, in the series of frescoes in the Palazzo Labia, Venice, which is his masterpiece in mural decoration. Personally I am inclined to think that the smaller is the more delightful of the two. In completeness of design, delicacy of colour, and deftness of handling it is, in its kind, a very remarkable achievement. Contemporary with Tiepolo, Guardi was producing exquisitely silvery and atmospheric landscapes and Venetian scenes, such as the four fine examples in the collection, and Canaletto more formal, but perhaps more masterly, views of the canals and palaces of his native city.

Tiepolo's last years were spent in Spain, and there in 1746, twenty-three years before his death, Goya, the Spanish painter, whose work forms perhaps the most live link between the painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was born. But if Tiepolo's frescoes in the Royal Palace in Madrid probably influenced the youthful Goya by their decorative quality, he was from the first a very personal artist. There was a certain wildness in his nature, and his instinct for the dramatic,



TIEPOLO
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA



the bizarre, and the diabolical in life and beauty found expression through his art, which is remarkable for spontaneity and vitality, rather than for balance and mastery. Subjectively his work was very varied, and includes, in addition to well-nigh two hundred portraits, incidents and satires of social life, scenes of plague and war, church pictures and decorations, and *cartons* for tapestry. It is by one of the last that he is represented here. Some of his *cartons*, which were paintings and not cartoons in the ordinary sense, show the influence of Boucher and Fragonard, but even in them the subjects are not fanciful inventions in mythology or gallantry, but observations or commentaries on contemporary life. That in Edinburgh, *El Medico* (1780), is at once one of the wittiest and one of the most audacious in design and colour. Arranged in broad colour-masses, clear in silhouette and contrast, simplicity of handling accentuates both its decorative quality and its pictorial effectiveness. The pyramidal shape made by the red-cloaked figure of the quack doctor, seated before a brass brazier in which charcoal burns, by the roadside, forms a splendid, ringing passage of warm colour against the black costumes of two attendants beside him and the deep blue sky in two shades, which forms the background. Here audacity has been so justly calculated to the effect desired that it issues in a beauty which, if disconcerting to some, is exciting

and dynamic and yet self-contained. In his later pictures and etchings his attitude to life was increasingly dramatic and ironic, and he painted in ways which foreshadow Delacroix, Daumier, Manet, and many moderns, and make his work of great interest in the more recent history of art.

CHAPTER IX

FLEMISH AND DUTCH PICTURES : SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

WHEN you pass from the first two rooms, in which the Italian pictures are arranged, into the great room on the foreign side of the Gallery, you are at once struck by marked changes in the character of the pictures there. It is not only that they belong to other schools and, for the most part, to a later period. Such circumstances no doubt contribute much to the feeling of contrast produced. But, except the three great Van Dycks, in which Italian influence is clearly evident, the pictures in Room III show profound alterations in choice of subject-matter, in treatment, and in technique. These are all related, and express a changed attitude to picture-making. That in turn, however, had a deep and previously active source.

When dealing with the origins of early Flemish painting, the causes which made its most characteristic product the altar-piece, and the close relationship of that to the easel picture were discussed. It was also indicated that the work of the Northern painters showed a greater delight in

nature and actual visual appearances than did that of the Italians, and, on a broad comparison, while Italian painting was decorative and abstract in basis, Flemish painting was objective and realistic.

Early in the seventeenth century, the Flemish school, which during the preceding hundred years had suffered eclipse under Italian influences, entered upon a second great period. While the *Romanists* had failed to attain the suave beauty or the impressive grandeur to which they had sacrificed their native energy and racial naturalism, Rubens and the many Flemings working under his influence used what they learned in decorative composition and colour effect from Italian art to express a genuine regard for reality and a buoyant and lusty, almost a purely material, relish for life. This was apparent in religious and mythological pictures, as well as in portraiture, peasant subjects, and landscapes. Rubens—"the most Flemish of Flemish painters and the greatest of them," as A. J. Wauters describes him—is, one regrets, not represented in Edinburgh; nor, except for a fine self-portrait and several highly characteristic drawings, is Jordaens, who devoted his notable but coarser technical gifts and vigorously inventive but commoner mind to not very dissimilar subjects.

On the other hand Van Dyck, who was less Flemish than either, appears at the very height of his engaging and stately achievement. We are inclined,

perhaps, to judge him from the series of portraits of Charles I and his Court, by which he may be said to have laid the foundations of the English school in portraiture. The charm of these portraits is great, and they perpetuate, if they do not in part originate, the refined and noble type we are glad to think of as English. Yet compared with the pictures he did in Italy or in Flanders, after his return and before he settled in England (1632), they are less profound, and seem in some degree the work of a courtier, wishing to flatter or please, rather than of an acute and instinctive observer not only of the face and carriage, but of the whole personality of a sitter. The Italian portraits are graver and richer in pictorial effect, the Flemish keener and more racial both in characterisation and in style.

It is to Van Dyck's sojourn in Genoa (1623-5) that the three pictures in the collection belong, and in all one can see the influence of Venice superimposed upon that of Rubens and his own Flemish origin. There are in the great group of the Lomellini family, and the even more distinguished full-length of *An Italian Noble* of the Gentili family, a unity of effect and a deep resonance of tone (time may have helped the deep colour harmony ; it has at least added to its unity by darkening the blues) inspired by the Venetian masters, to whose example also the greater richness and simplicity of the

actual handling, less glittering and less on the surface than Rubens and the Flemings as a whole, is no doubt due. In Venice he likewise acquired "the art of raising a physiognomy to the height of a type"; but, while the Italian type is marked in his Genoese pictures, it never imposes itself unduly on the individual. Each of the three proud men in these two pictures is unmistakably himself, one would recognise them anywhere; and the gentle lady and the two patrician children in the group are as clearly differentiated. But it is by their stately and noble ensemble, which is animated by a combination of elegance and distinction peculiarly his own, and possesses spaciousness without emptiness, that these fine portraits make an unforgettable impression. In the beautiful and, as regards colour, better-preserved *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian*, the Rubenesque influence is perhaps more apparent, though here again the more stylish treatment of the naked saint, the deeper harmony of the more varied colour, and the greater repose of the design suggest kinship to Venetian art.

In addition to the Van Dycks and the Jordaens portrait, Flemish painting of this period is represented by a quiet but powerful portrait of the celebrated Marchese di Spinola by Sustermans, a rather brilliant Snyder's *Mischievous Monkeys*, two animal studies by Fyt, a couple of fine Teniers and a few other pictures of less interest.



VAN DYCK
THE LOMELLINI FAMILY

[p. 120

In the neighbouring country of Holland, free at long last of the Spanish yoke, republican in constitution, Protestant in religion and rapidly becoming rich, there appeared almost simultaneously with the later Flemish school, a different type of picture and one destined to play an important part in the future developments of painting.

Compared with that of the preceding hundred years or that of the following, European painting in the seventeenth century, considered broadly, was realistic in tendency. The Italian "naturalisti," in revolt from the art of the high Renaissance, with its love of splendour and decorative beauty, now made realism the basis of a style which by its insistence on certain exaggerated effects seems to mock its origin; the sentimentally envisaged beggar-boys of Murillo, scarcely less than the superb prose of Velazquez's dignified portraiture, were inspired by it in Spain; with the advent of Rubens, Flemish painting showed a very strong strain of it, especially on the fleshly side; in Holland, as we shall see, it was the determining factor in what was, in both matter and manner, a new phase of painting.

Never perhaps has art been more truly national than Dutch painting was throughout the seventeenth century, and nowhere else is the life of a people so clearly mirrored. Looking at Dutch pictures, one feels that their painters were engaged upon a

self-portrait of Holland rather than in painting a succession of incidents, landscapes and people. Nor are the reasons far to seek. The Reformation had severed the connection between religion and art, overturned the monasteries, and made church pictures unnecessary; and the national temper, as had been evident in previous attempts at Italianised art, was inimical to mythology. Moreover, the Hollanders had but recently achieved, after painful travail, a new, independent, and prosperous national existence, and everything in it and its setting had become of vital interest. So every phase of that life finds a record, except those of toil or sadness, which were avoided with a unanimity, only broken by Rembrandt and his followers, which argues a desire to escape remembering the hardships of the past. Further incident or landscape was regarded under normal rather than exceptional or evanescent conditions.

Apart from official portrait groups, Dutch pictures, being painted for prosperous burghers and merchants, and going into comparatively small houses, were mostly modest in size. This in turn influenced the actual handling and led to careful drawing and delicate and refined brush-work, which were further stimulated by desire to give a natural look to the final result. At the same time the sense of envelopment, which marks Dutch painting as a whole, gives a unity of effect which, with so many small objects

to relate pictorially, could scarcely have been attained without it. As was the case with the special apprehension of colour noted in Venetian painting, this special sensitiveness to aerial tone originated in climatic conditions. The atmosphere of the Netherlands is humid, if nearly always luminous, and, influenced by its gentle veiling, effects there are usually softened, even over scenes with bright local colour. Under these conditions aerial tone and envelopment became of primary importance, and were related, though not subordinated, to the chiaroscuro design, which had been one of the discoveries of the previous century. This combination, added to the strong tendency to subjective naturalism, already discussed, gives Dutch art the quality of complete and, at its best, subtle realism which distinguishes it amongst the schools of Europe.

Various phases and the general characteristics of Dutch painting can be studied, if not completely yet in a delightful way, in the Edinburgh collection. Portraiture appears in very notable examples of Rembrandt, Hals and Bol, and Maes, Jacob de Bray and a few more are also well seen ; genre, in some ways the most characteristic, as it was the most original and vivacious side, is less adequately represented, though there are typical works by Adrian, and Isaac Ostade, Jan Steen, David Teniers, Le Ducq, and others ; landscape is near its best in fine things by Hercules Segers, Van Goyen, Jacob

van Ruisdael, Hobbema and Ten Oever, and by Willem van de Velde and Bakhuysen, the sea painters, amongst the "nationalists," while the examples of the Italianised painters of the middle part of the century, the Boths, Berchem, Du Jardin, Linglebach and Saftleven, who were influenced by Claude, are specially charming. In addition, interior painting is represented by one of De Witte's finest and most important works, and still life by a subtly beautiful Kalf and two admirable De Heems. But it would be more entertaining as well as more instructive for the visitor not fully conversant with Dutch painting to apply what has been said about its technique, pictorial methods and underlying spirit to the examples in the Gallery himself, than that he should be taken round and have them pointed out in detail. There are, however, three or four pictures of such exceptional quality that special attention must be drawn to them.

Rembrandt is the great glory of Dutch art, but his glory comes from unlikeness rather than from likeness to the realistic tendencies of his school. His genius was of that supreme order which transcends the bounds of nationality. While he based his effects on tone and designed in light and shade, as the Dutch custom was, he used them as a means of emotional expression and not, as others did, as aids to factual representation. His aim was to concentrate attention upon the elements essential to the



HALS
A DUTCH LADY

expression of his conceptions by suppressing all subsidiary detail, and to attain it he used light and shade increasingly in a seemingly arbitrary, and, if so original a treatment can be so described, a conventional way. Owing, perhaps, to this pre-occupation, his colour, although his pictures are richly luminous in general effect, lacks variety and is often little more than a deep harmony of golden lights and brown shadows, subtly varied in tone rather than in tint. His technique went through an analogous evolution. Gradually, from careful beginnings, delicately touched in smooth impasto, he developed a method of handling which, while retaining delicate passages, was bold and apparently ragged, with a total effect subtly suggestive and dynamically significant.

These external features, as they might be called, of his art, were but the vehicle through which Rembrandt expressed his profound and moving thoughts about life and nature. He cared so little for beauty, as commonly understood, that he has been described as a painter of the ugly, and certainly desire for charm of face and grace of form is not evident in his work. It was the inner meaning of things—the character of his sitters, illuminating face, attitude and figure ; the spiritual and human significance of incidents in the life of Christ ; the poetic suggestiveness of landscape—that he responded to, and his pictorial expression is bathed

in a luminous light and shadow which not only echoes his emotional and dramatic conceptions with extraordinary felicity, but invests his pictures with a magic which gives them a mysterious and haunting beauty all their own.

The late and most moving phase of Rembrandt's painting is not represented, except by a self-portrait at present on loan ; but the wonder of his chiaroscuro and the subtilty of his handling turns the *Hendrikje Stoffels* (c. 1655) into a play and pattern of light and shadow, gentle and mysterious, and charged with a beauty which, subjectively, that rather plain and fat young woman, raising herself in bed, does not possess. The small but largely conceived *Landscape*, of cliff-girdled shore brooded over by dark clouds, is marked by the imaginative quality of his work in that field ; but expert opinion inclines to transfer this fine picture to Hercules Seghers, a little-known but now highly esteemed Dutch master, born sixteen years before him.

Many of Rembrandt's most moving ideas were expressed in etchings and drawings, for, like Dürer, he worked not only for people who could buy pictures (in his later life they seldom did—from him), but for those who could afford but a few coppers or a guilder or two for a print. A group of etchings is shown in the print-room, and there are two or three drawings upstairs.

Attracted by his personality and his early successes, Rembrandt had many pupils. The impression he left on them was not lasting, however, and nearly all reverted to the more prosaic and realistic racial type. But in a high moment some pupil, perhaps Ferdinand Bol, for the attribution is uncertain, painted the fascinating and mysteriously-lighted *Portrait of a Young Man* in a voluminous yellow cloak, which is one of the most striking pictures in the Gallery, and a delightful little *Dutch Family* portrait group by Nicolas Maes also shows the inspiring influence of the master.

Franz Hals, the other great portrait-painter of the school, is represented as well, and more characteristically. In his work the pure Dutch spirit of delight in life for its own sake finds supreme expression, for he also possessed in extraordinary measure a capacity for setting down what he saw with vividness, force and infectively delightful verve. His portraits do not approach Rembrandt's in illuminating insight or emotional significance; they are a less profound and moving manifestation of the human spirit; but, on their own more realistic plane, they are instinct with life and character, and in certain brilliant technical qualities—surety of drawing, vitality of brush-work, unhesitating arrangement—well-nigh incomparable. Of all the Old Masters, he was the greatest exponent of direct painting. The freshness and certainty of his touch

and the assurance with which he built up his breadth of effect are a constant source of admiration to painters and of wonder to laymen. This being so, one need not wish that he had had other, if perhaps subtler, qualities, for very probably they would have dulled the vim of his achievement. The two three-quarter lengths we have are amongst the very best works of his middle period. They exhibit his technical gifts at their most brilliant, and have, in addition, a dignity of conception which was not always his. The smaller and, in idea, more vivacious *Topper* shows an earlier phase, when he used more positive colour than the black, white, and grey which, employed with a fine sense of harmony, issue in something almost as good as colour in the other two.

Excepting Rembrandt's, which was dramatic in quality, Dutch landscape-painting reached its highest expression in the grave and austere pictures of Jacob van Ruisdael. If usually sombre in effect, they are often poetic in mood and, at times, touch the chord of splendid solemnity which, combined with its broad and impressive design, though that, of course, is an integral element in the impression, makes our *Banks of a River* a great masterpiece. There is a passage in the French painter Fromentin's great book about Dutch painting, which might have been inspired by this picture, and, as it sums up the essential qualities of Ruisdael with

extraordinary insight and felicity, part of it may be quoted here. "Of all the Dutch painters, Ruisdael is the one who most nobly resembles his country," he writes. "He has its breath, its sadness, its rather dreary placidity, and its monotonous and tranquil charm. With vanishing lines, a severe palette, in two grand traits expressly belonging to its physiognomy—grey and limitless horizons, and a grey heaven by which the infinite is measured—he has left us of Holland a portrait which I will not call familiar, but intimate, lovable, admirably faithful, which never grows old."

Since this book was written the collection has been notably enriched through the gift, by the sons of the late Mr. W. A. Coates, of a famous picture by Vermeer of Delft. *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* is considered the most important example of this rare and exquisite master in this country.

CHAPTER X

FRENCH PICTURES : EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

As it happens, the art of the eighteenth century is admirably represented in the collection. The masterpieces of Tiepolo and the delightful landscapes by Guardi and Canaletto, which have been discussed already, stand for what was best in Italy during that period ; British painting, as we have seen, is represented by admirable examples of some of its finest masters ; and the little group of French pictures now to be considered would be notable anywhere.

In all feeling for decoration is apparent, and with it a delightful sense of the beauty of the medium is inwrought. With Tiepolo, whose most characteristic work was done for great spaces in palaces, these are so closely knit that together they make the special quality of his art, and it is also on decorative and technical elements, rather than on representational veracity, that the appeal of Canaletto's depends. In English painting, on the other hand, while the stateliness, balance, and elegance—associated not only with the social life but the

architecture, literature, and music of the century—determined the general ensemble of its portraiture and landscape, a real apprehension of character vivifies the finest portraits of Hogarth, Ramsay, Reynolds, and Gainsborough, and a love of nature for its own sake gives fragrance to the rural scenes and episodes painted by Wilson, Gainsborough, and Morland. Conditions in France were different, and are reflected in its art, which was an appendage of Court life, as it played at greatness in the Tuileries, enacted sophisticated pastorals in the gardens at Versailles, or sought the intimacy of the boudoirs of royal courtesans. Apart from portraiture, which did not, however, escape its elegant affectations, its chosen province was the “ Isle of Cythera ” and its motto, “ *Le Désir de Plaire.* ” Still, on the purely artistic side, the greater French painters of the eighteenth century achieved intriguing things, delightful in composition, colour, and handling, and marked by an elegance which, if somewhat artificial, has rarely been surpassed. If much less naturalistic, these *fêtes galantes* were pitched in a higher key, with clearer lighting and purer colour than had been the case in Dutch genre during the previous hundred years.

Long before this, French painting had had other phases. After a period of interesting “ primitive ” art, influenced from both Flanders and Italy but with definite native characteristics, there had been

an organised attempt to establish an Italianised school at Fontainebleau ; and that, again, had been followed by the grandiose and flamboyant style associated with Louis XIV. Yet, while the last was taking shape, Nicolas Poussin and Claude, the two greatest French painters in the classic sense, were producing those learned, balanced, and dignified mythological pictures and landscapes which established French art upon the basis of form, which, despite many variations, has been perhaps its most constant factor. Poussin is represented in Edinburgh (at present on loan to the London gallery) by his magnificent version of Bellini's famous bacchanal, which is almost as much a creation as a copy, and Claude by a lovely landscape, *The Fisherman and the Angler*, instinct with his sensitive apprehension of atmosphere and his fine sense of design.

But the French pictures which count most in the collection are the little group of eighteenth-century works which, once in the possession of Allan Ramsay, the Scottish painter, was bequeathed by Lady Murray in 1861, and one or two more, from other sources, associated with it. Allan Ramsay's Watteau, *Fête Champêtre*, is one of the most celebrated of that master's triumphs, and in it his special gifts appear at their most alluring. Moreover, it is in extraordinary fine condition. So the petal-like beauty of the faces of the little actors in his social comedy and the graceful spontaneity of their



WATTEAU
FÊTE CHAMPÊTRE



movements and grouping, the soft brilliance of their brightly coloured costumes and the suggestion of woodland mystery and beauty, which the formal setting of fountain and park trees somehow holds, are undimmed. In technique it has a clear connection with the Rubens tradition, but how refined and tender the caressing touch and handling are when compared with the verve and abandon in such a picture as the exhilarating if drunken *Kermess*, *Peasants Dancing*, in the Prado. Partly through his exquisite artistry and his wonderful feeling for delicate cadence and accent in design, but also because his mind was a transmuting medium, the elegant pose and glossed sensuality of the *fête galante* become in his pictures charged with a fragile and pensive beauty, which, while it enchants, is shadowed by a poignant sense of the transitoriness of even the most iridescent *joie de vivre*. One sees the marked difference not only between his attitude to things, but between the quality of his technical gifts and theirs by comparing with the *Fête Champêtre*, or the smaller but also charming *French Pastoral*, the *Toy Windmill* by Lancret, or the *Ladies Bathing* by Pater. Yet they were the most conspicuous of his understudies, and these are amongst the best of their pictures.

The work of Boucher marks a somewhat later phase. His was less an art of picture-making than of mural decoration, though his canvases were usually

framed or inserted in panelling. Of this aspect of his work there are remarkable examples in the Wallace collection. He was a portrait-painter also, and it is by a famous little oblong of *Madame de Pompadour*, the mistress of Louis XV, who was the artist's great patron, that he is represented here. But for all its brilliance of colour and accomplishment of execution, the effect, compassed so skilfully, is superficial and hard, and leaves one unmoved. Greuze, represented by three or four fine examples of his consciously sentimental and sweetly pretty posing—of which the *Girl with Dead Canary* is the most perfect and the *Girl with Folded Hands* the most popular—belongs to the partial transition to simpler themes which preceded the crash of the Revolution, which not only brought this somewhat trivial but charming art to a sudden close, but made classicism once more ascendant in French painting.

Amongst the eighteenth-century painters J. B. S. Chardin occupies a unique place. He treated simple domestic incidents in the life of the bourgeoisie with sympathy untainted by sentimentalism, and still-life pieces with a profound sense of the beauty of common things, and, at the same time, painted in a masterly yet unassertive way, in which lovely tone, colour, and brush-work make complete harmony. Everything he did thus possesses a peculiar and personal charm. The little still-life in the gallery is a delightful specimen of his work in that



GOYA
EL MEDICO

genre ; but in Scotland one has to go to Glasgow to see his subject-painting. The Hunterian Museum in the University there contains three specially beautiful examples.

And here, although it has been referred to already, mention should be made of the work of the Spaniard, Goya (represented by the arresting *El Medico*), which, connected on the one side with the *fête galante* and reaching forward on the other to the passionate interest in drama of incident and treatment which marked the French Romanticists, forms such an important link in the evolution of painting.

Save for a dramatic *Entombment* by Eugene Delacroix (the incarnation as well as the pictorial standard-bearer of the volcanic Romantic movement) the struggle between the fervid Romanticists and the formal Classicists during the second quarter of last century, which forms one of the most exciting episodes in the history of modern art—in literature and music no less than in painting—is unrepresented in Edinburgh. But while the influence exerted on Scottish painting by Delacroix and his fellows was negligible, that of the great landscape school associated with Barbizon, which issued from the movement, has been profound, and its work is well shown. As indicated in the introduction, this is due to preference. Scottish collectors, as well as Scottish painters, have admired these French

painters and their Dutch contemporaries greatly, and the fine series in the gallery came, for the most part, from two bequests.

Except Théodore Rousseau amongst the French and Matthew Maris amongst the Dutch, all the greater men are represented. They were chiefly landscape-painters, though a few, including the most nobly inspired, combined figures or animals with landscape. Pictures by John Constable, the English artist, shown at the Salon of 1824, had influenced the older Romanticists profoundly in a technical sense; but the freshness and sparkle, and the sense of movement and the weather, he had suggested to the landscape men, were modified by study of Dutch seventeenth-century art, and the tone and colour of Barbizon pictures incline to be dark and old-masterly, though with a subtler feeling for atmospheric colour and a deeper sense of mystery.

In design and manner Corot recalls the classicism of Claude, especially in his early work, which is more firmly constructed and fuller in material content than his later. Still, delightful as his Italian pictures are, the essential Corot really emerges when, having mastered the form, he painted those magical lyrics of stillness, of dawn or dusk or softened daylight by lakeside or in forest glade, which were his distinctive contribution to art. Never has the haunting and aloof spirit of the woods been so exquisitely expressed as in the finest pictures

of his maturity, amongst which *The Goat Herd*, at least, amongst the nine examples in the collection, holds a place.

The qualities of J. F. Millet, the other great man of this group, were different, and in many ways contrasting. Like Corot, he was a gifted designer and a true poet ; but the deeper significance of reality and the poignant relationship of man to the soil were his themes, rather than visual beauty and the exquisiteness of pictorial rhythm ; and his style is austere and monumental in line and mass, if somewhat deficient in charm of surface and flexibility of handling. He was, as has been said, " the laureate in paint of man's struggle for existence with the obstinate earth " : he introduced into art, a new and profoundly moving vision of rural life, and he expressed it with a nobility and distinction which make his achievements not only distinctive, but memorable. In the balance of its close-knit design, the sense of individual life and dynamic energy in its firmly-drawn figures, and its sober scheme of colour, with clear-struck notes of blue and white, the *Hay-binders* is typical of his work in oil, while *The Wood-choppers* is a splendid example of the drawings in which his greatest gifts appear at their very best.

Something of the same dramatic genius, but less restrained in expression and often more painter-like in quality, marked the art of Daumier, whose

subjects, however, were Parisian in inspiration and usually treated in a satiric or fierce way. *Le Peintre* is quieter in mood than usual, but is pregnant with his vital feeling for life and his expressive technique. Diaz, Dupré, Decamps, and Daubigny, Troyon and Jacque, Lepine and Harpignies are also represented, Daubigny in *La Frette* and Troyon in *Un Pâturage en Touraine* specially well; and by Monticelli there is a series which shows that potent colourist and delightfully sportive inventor of fantasies related to the *fête galante* to signal advantage.

Outside the circle of Romanticism, several pictures challenge attention. Of these Bastien-Lepage's *Pas Mèche*, Claude Monet's *Poplars*, and Gauguin's *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* are perhaps the most important and significant. Their dates are 1882, c. 1891, 1889, respectively, which brings them fairly close in time, though they represent three marked and successive phases in French painting—Realism, Impressionism, and Post-Impressionism. In the first we can see that concentration on the external appearance of reality indicated by "values"—that is, colour and tone regarded as one and measured comparatively as degrees of light and dark—which was the pictorial basis of the widely influential *plein air* movement of the eighteen-eighties. But in it there is also that instinctive sympathy and naïve insight which made Lepage more than the

superficial realist he was often considered. Monet's *Poplars on the Epte* again is eminently typical of the impressionist phase which followed. It shows how the painters of that group (who were in turn a potent influence) made the rendering of light, atmosphere, and movement their objective, and expressed the brilliant and scintillating aspects of landscape in pure colour, with little consideration for light and shade or formal design, but often with vivid truth. But here also there is more than a theory at work ; and to me, at least, this picture of Monet's is a lovely and joyous thing, which evokes a recurring thrill of pleasure not only through what it recalls, but in virtue of the beauty of its high-pitched harmony of colour and light. Like Debussy's music, it is clear and high and radiant, but neither forced nor shrill.

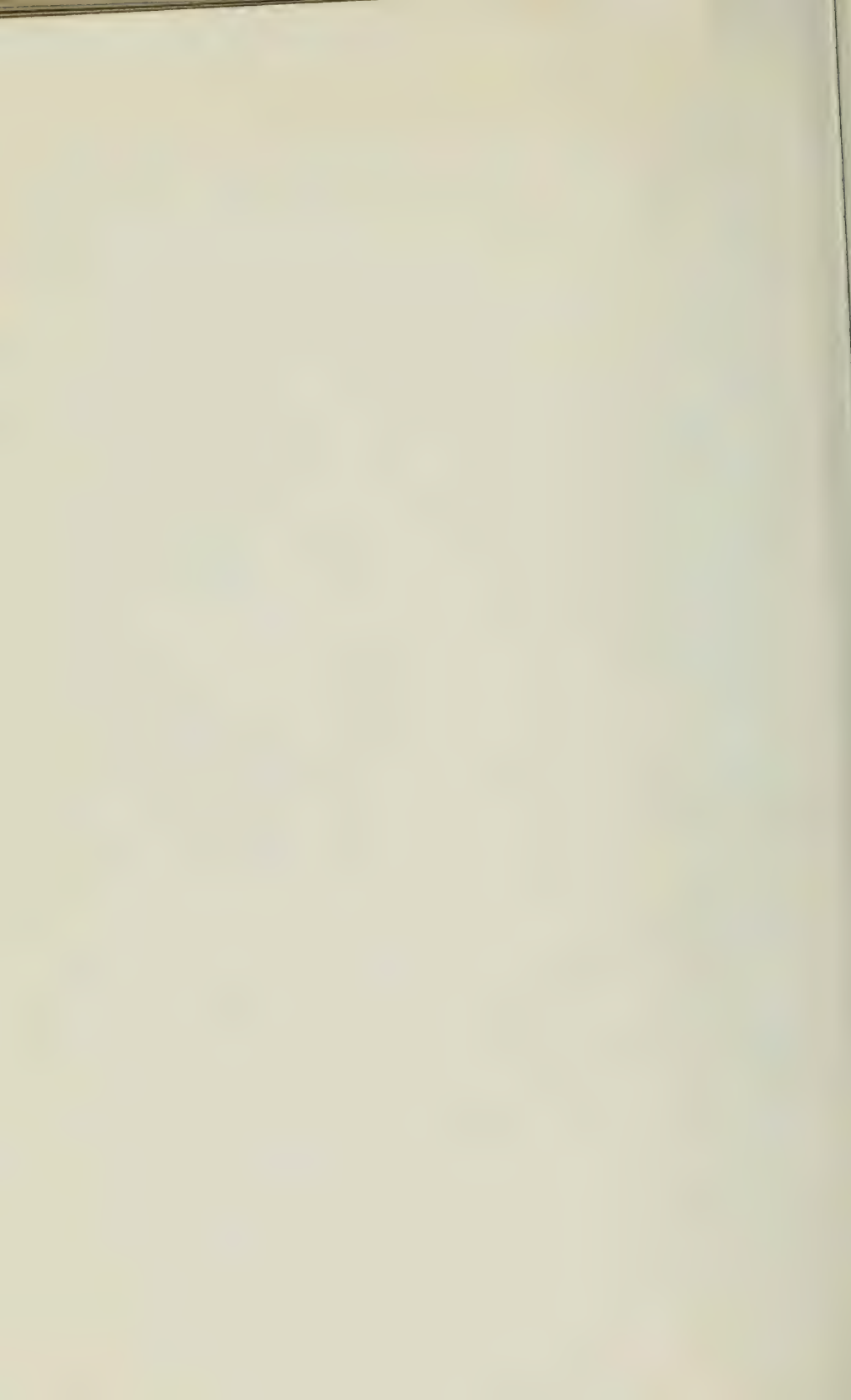
The Gauguin may be said to mark the reaction from naturalism, which had, in different ways, underlain realism and impressionism alike, and had been pushed to extremes by both. Carrying the impressionist love of bright colour with them, the leaders of post-impressionism turned their backs on representation, and, while accentuating volume by insistence on what is called " the third dimension," made a special point of abstract design and colour-pattern—all in ways very disconcerting to everybody except its immediate initiates. In thus making the expression of feeling more important

than the imitation of the superficial appearances of reality, the new movement was only consciously stressing an attitude which, if forgotten by the realists, has always been active in creative art. But the followers of post-impressionism, rather than its founders, did this with self-conscious exaggeration, and, making a virtue of the clumsiness, which neither Cezanne nor Van Gogh could help, flaunted incompetence in the face of a disconcerted public as a merit and a sign of artistic grace. In painting, at least, there has been no clearer demonstration of Anatole France's saying, "Since the Revolution, the Frenchman is become terribly emphatic." Gauguin, the third of the original trinity, was, if less influential with the followers, a fine and accomplished artist within his limitations, and *Jacob and the Angel* has a vividly beautiful colour-scheme, which—with the emphatic linear pattern formed by the line of white-coifed and blue-gowned Breton women in front, against the field of potent red across which a tree-trunk passes diagonally—issues in a pictorial ensemble of singular vitality and interest.

A few bronzes by Barye, Dalou, Rodin, Degas, and Bartholomé, if only hinting at the wonderful achievement of France in sculpture during the nineteenth century, add to the charm and interest of the collection.



GAUGUIN
JACOB WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL



POSTSCRIPT

OTHER PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

WORKS by living artists are not included in the Scottish National Gallery, and in Edinburgh there is no permanent gallery of contemporary art. But, in some degree, the functions of the Tate Gallery are performed by the Diploma Collection of the Royal Scottish Academy and the collection of the Scottish Modern Arts Association, which are exhibited by the Board of Trustees for the National Galleries, during the winter (from early September to late February), in part of the Royal Scottish Academy building, which stands on the Mound, between the National Gallery and Princes Street. As its name implies, the Diploma Collection consists of works given by members on election as Academicians, and, with certain blanks amongst the earlier men, it goes back to the beginning of the Academy in 1826. The Scottish Modern Arts Association is much more recent in origin, but, considering that its income is entirely derived from the subscriptions of members, it has gathered since 1907, partly by gift, an important and exceedingly interesting series of works, chiefly by

Scottish artists, though including characteristic pictures by Mr. George Clausen, Sir William Orpen, Sir C. J. Holmes, Mr. William Nicholson, Mr. Charles Sims, Mr. W. W. Russell, and a few other aliens. Inevitably there is a certain amount of overlapping with the National Gallery, and some artists, including McTaggart, Cameron, Wingate and Alexander, are represented in all three. But taken together these two collections give a pretty good idea of recent and contemporary painting in Scotland, and carry the representation of Scottish art onward, from where the National Gallery leaves off, to the present. As this period includes E. A. Walton, Alexander Roche, W. Y. Macgregor, C. H. Mackie, and Edwin Alexander amongst the recently deceased, and Sir James Guthrie, Sir John Lavery, Sir D. Y. Cameron, and Messrs. Pittendrigh Macgillivray, W. Reid Dick, James Paterson, E. A. Hornel, James Pryde, J. H. Lorimer, Muirhead Bone, and S. J. Peploe, to mention some typical names, amongst the living, the characteristics of the Glasgow school, which created so much interest at home and abroad in the eighteen-eighties and nineties, and of some succeeding developments are illustrated, in not a few instances, by fine examples.

The interest of the collection in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Queen Street is different from that in the National Gallery on the Mound. While the first consideration at the latter is artistic

merit, at the former historical interest is paramount. For the purpose of the Portrait Gallery is the illustration of Scottish history by bringing together portraits of the chief actors in it. Incidentally, however, it also represents the art of portraiture and contains a considerable number of works of high artistic quality. Arranged on a chronological basis, additional interest is given to the collection by grouping the chief figures in each epoch. This focuses attention, and at the same time reflects that play and interplay of character and that contest of personalities, as well as of causes, which are amongst the potent factors in life and one of the great fascinations of history. Of the chief features mention may be made of the group associated with Mary, Queen of Scots, which includes one of the few authentic portraits of her; the contest between Crown and Covenant, centrally typified in fine portraits of Montrose and Argyll; the Union of the Parliaments, shown in likenesses of prominent actors for or against it; the romance of the '15 and the '45 associated with an exceptionally important series of the last Stuart princes, in which particular interest attaches to the finest and most authentic portrait of Prince Charlie; the special screen on which all the authentic portraits of Burns are gathered; and, to name no more, the series which shows Sir Walter Scott and his cycle.



DUE DATE

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